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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

presented by

REV. JOHN L. LOSH

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

QUESTIONS OF FAITH

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A Series of Lectures on the Creed

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE lectures which compose this volume were given in Renfield Church, Glasgow, on Sunday evenings during last winter, and are now published both in accordance with what was intended when they were arranged and in response to various requests. They are meant to be primarily apologetic in character, though, as befitted the day and place of their delivery, also frankly religious. Each lecturer is responsible for his own work only.

P. C. S.

RENFIELD CHURCH, GLASGOW,
1904.

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The Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholick Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting. Amen.

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WHAT IS GOD?

By the Rev.

JAMES ORR, D.D.

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WHAT IS GOD?

JACOB struggling with the angel—that mysterious One of whom it is declared that Jehovah's name was in him—is the figure of man in all ages struggling to wrest from God the secret of His nature and character. The quest after God is, indeed, the grandest and most difficult of all quests. God is the greatest thought that can occupy the human mind—the thought of all thoughts. To know truly what God is, to understand rightly His relations to us, and to be conscious of ourselves as standing in right relations to Him—this is, indeed, the sum and essence of all good.

Yet it may seem a strange question to be asking from a Christian pulpit, what God is. Are we yet, it may be said, still at this alphabet of things, still spelling out the name of God? The pagan thinker, groping in the dark, with only the dim lamp of reason in

his hand, might ask such a question; but how, it may be thought, can it be appropriate on the lips of those who have the Bible in their hands—God's own revelation of His character and will; who have been familiar from their childhood with the answer in the Catechism—an answer, I venture to say, as yet unsurpassed in comprehensiveness and succinctness—'God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.'

Yet there are two reasons which may satisfy us that this way of putting the question is a fitting and needful one, even for us. It is true we have the revelation of God in the Bible and in His Son Jesus Christ, but it does not follow that we have all reflectively pondered or appropriated what the Bible has to teach us about God. We may possess the Bible, yet we may never have set ourselves down to ask deliberately, What does the Bible teach us about God? and may be able to give only vague and misty answers to that question. We may repeat the words of the Creed, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven

and earth'; yet we may never have asked ourselves seriously what these words mean. And there is a second reason for asking this question. The Christian answer to the question, What is God? no longer stands unchallenged. There probably never has been a time when it was unchallenged, but if there ever has been such a time, it certainly is not so now. Systems of unbelief lift their heads around us, resting partly on scientific, partly on philosophic, grounds, sometimes on both, which reject in whole or part the Christian conception of God, and substitute, or seek to substitute, for it some notion of the Supreme Power of the universe, which they take to be profounder or wiser. The Christian answer to the question, What is God? is thus put on its defence. If the believer in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is to hold his own, he must be prepared to give an answer for the faith that is in him. Nor, if his faith is well grounded, need he fear the challenge. If his view of God is true, he may be sure it will approve itself also as the most reasonable and satisfying of all answers to this

question. Reason and faith are two sides of our nature, which only the unwise will seek to separate from one another.

One thing more at this preliminary stage. You will observe our question is, *What* is God? not, whether there is a God, or whether such a being as we call God exists. It might seem at first, indeed, as if this question of the existence of God were the prior one. For, if God should prove to be an empty name, an illusion of man's fancy, a projection of his own thought upon the infinite void; if there be really no Being to whom this name can justly apply, of what use is it to ask what God is? Yet for our present purpose I think we may see that the form the question assumes is the wise and proper one. Atheism—blank atheism—is a very uncommon frame of mind at any time. You must have observed that Scripture itself never raises the question of the existence of God. It assumes throughout, what is indeed the truth, that the world generally has seldom doubted the existence of a Being, or beings, whom it regards as divine; that the question of supreme concern for it always is, not, Is there

a God or gods? but, What is the true conception of God? How are we most worthily and justly to think of God? And modern thought, when you come to look at it, is in no very different case. There have been times when atheism prevailed in certain circles, but the forms of unbelief in vogue to-day would hardly describe themselves as atheistic. At the bottom of most of them you will find the acknowledgment that there is a Supreme Power—in whatever terms it may be described—a Power on which this universe, and all that is in it, depends; from which the universe has its origin, or of which it is the manifestation. You will find in these systems the admission that this Power is one; that it is eternal; that it is infinite; that it is the source of all the energy, physical and mental, in the universe; that it is the ground of all order, beauty, truth, and law. Mr. Spencer will grant you this much; Professor Haeckel will grant you this much. And the representatives of these views will not scruple, many of them, to give to this highest Power even the name of God. And this, it seems to me, is much. It is some-

thing to have it acknowledged, to begin with, that there is this infinite, eternal, energising Power in the universe; for, at least, it cuts out certain conceptions of God which belong to a lower stage of man's development, and no longer need be argued or discussed. No one is called on seriously nowadays to argue such an elementary question, for example, as the unity of God, or His eternity or infinity, or His omnipotence or omnipresence, and the like. The old idolatries and polytheisms, with the existing polytheisms of heathen lands, are discredited to thinking minds beyond the power of resurrection. The old pagan mythologies of Greece and Rome, their gods and goddesses, are swept from faith and history never to return. Only let us do the Bible the justice of remembering that this truth about the unity, eternity, and infinity of God is no new thing to it. At a time when everywhere else the world was overspread by idolatry, there went out from the little people of Israel, as afterwards from Christianity, this sublime testimony to the unity of God and to His universal providence, which no one would think

now of putting aside. Nay, it may be very confidently affirmed that without the help of the Bible the world would not have had this conviction yet.

All this, I say, is gain. But beyond this point there still arises the question, What is God? For it is not to be denied that these new theories still leave us very far short of the Biblical conception of God. In many respects, indeed, they are the negation of that conception. God, in the Biblical view of Him, is a personal, ethical, self-revealing Being. He is conceived of as living, as purposeful, as acting; as a Being holy, loving, and gracious; as capable of entering into the closest relations with man, and as requiring from man loving and intelligent service. To this Biblical representation of God the conceptions I have referred to are totally opposed. To them the Supreme Power of the universe is not a self-conscious, not a personal, Being at all; He is we know not what, beyond the general determinations already given; He is, in truth, not distinct from the universe, but is rather the reality or Power of which it is the manifestation; His

life is merged in its life, and its life, in turn, in His; the one flicker of consciousness to which it finally attains is in the brain of man. If we hold by the Biblical view of God, therefore, we must still ask, Does reason applied to the facts of the universe, to the actual system of things, bear out or contradict this view? Let me try briefly to answer this question.

1. One thing, then, which the Bible most clearly affirms about God, and which the views I have described deny, is, that God is *a personal intelligence*—is not a blind, unconscious Power groping its way up to consciousness in man, but is a self-conscious, purposeful Being, infinite in wisdom, the source of all intelligence and wisdom in us. I need hardly say that such a conception of God is, to begin with, the only one that suits the religious relation. There can really be no religious relation between a human soul—itself personal—and a being who has not this first attribute of personality. An Unknowable Power—an impersonal stream of tendency, even if it is declared to make for righteousness—a blind, unconscious reason or will, so far as we can put meaning into such

phrases—may evoke our awe, may impress us as one is impressed by the roar of Niagara, or the roll and crash of the thunderstorm. But this is not religion, not the relation of love and trust and obedience which we describe by that name. What, then, does reason say to this Biblical conception of God as personal? Does it negate it? I think it will require some hardihood to affirm this, when we reflect that the postulate on which the whole of our modern science rests is just this postulate of the rationality of the universe. If I interpret it aright, the whole meaning of science is that the universe is construable to intelligence. It admits, that is to say, of being rendered into terms of thought, and that a thought kindred with our own, else we could never penetrate its secret. A man of science stands before his facts, and says, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name; and he expects to understand the answer. There is in rational speech the power to give back an answer to him. It is a system of law, of order, of rational connection which he finds around him—as we say, a *cosmos*. But to say this is, to a man who understands his own language,

simply to say that thought has been at the making of it; but for thought it would not, and could not, have been there. And whatever philosophers may pretend to the contrary, the mind of man will never be persuaded that the reason which produced this wondrous frame of things can be, or is, a reason unconscious of itself, or of its own operations and ends, in what it does. As certainly as a man in the highest moments of his existence feels within himself that personality is higher than impersonality—consciousness higher than unconsciousness—so certainly will he feel that he can only think of the Supreme Power worthily when he thinks of it under this higher category.

You will see that this is a broader way of putting the argument for the intelligence of the Author of the universe than the old form of the argument from design. I am far from detracting from the value of that old argument, which seems to me to retain its force essentially unimpaired by theories of evolution or any other modern conception. Evolution is a method of production; it says nothing of the ultimate causes involved in that produc-

tion. By lengthening out the process to any extent you please, you cannot get rid of mind in it, if the manifest evidences of mind come out in the result. Most thoughtful evolutionists, therefore, admit that evolution without mind beyond it—without thought or reason behind it—will not explain the universe we know. But design as displayed in the beautiful forms and adjustments we see around us is only one, though perhaps the most striking, of the facts that reveal thought in the universe. If the argument rested on design alone, it might be possible to point here or there to apparent flaws, failures, incompletenesses, inexplicabilities in the process that seemed to vitiate it. These defects in the argument, however, vanish when we raise it to the broader contention, for which all science is a witness, of the rationality of the universe as a whole. Anomalies and difficulties do indeed remain. In face of them it may be difficult for a man left to the light of reason alone to rise to the sure conviction of the intelligence and wisdom of the Power he worships. But when the light of revelation

shines in—the revelation of a God of infinite wisdom and intelligence — giving him this assurance, he feels that this truth is in deepest accord with all his own reason teaches him.

2. This, then, is my first point in the answer to the question, What is God? But next, from the rational, I pass to something higher—to the *moral attributes* of God. There is an old familiar argument for the existence of God drawn from the possession of the idea of God. We have, it is said, the idea of an all-perfect —of an absolutely perfect—Being. How can such an idea, it is argued, be ours if there be no reality to correspond with it? Or how can there be the idea of an all-perfect Being which is not, at the same time, the idea of an all-real Being? The argument in this form may perhaps be felt to be not very convincing; but suppose we turn it round about, and, assuming—as I think we have a warrant to do—that there is a Supreme Power in the universe—a Power which is one, eternal, and infinite, go on to argue that our worthiest thoughts of this Power we call God are sure to be our truest thoughts; that at least everything

unworthy must be excluded from our thought of Him, do we not feel that, put it in this form, the reasoning assumes a very different character? This is, in truth, the postulate we all work from, consciously or unconsciously, in forming our thoughts of God. It is not in any sense an arbitrary postulate. Just as we feel, in arguing from our own rationality, that there must be a universal, eternal, perfect Reason energising in the universe, so we feel that this moral nature of ours, with its ideals of moral worth, must have its root or ground in a Being who is essentially good and excellent —who is *the* absolutely good One. And this, if you put it to the test, you will find to be directly or indirectly acknowledged by nearly every one. Ask the atheist or agnostic if he could conceivably entertain, or permit you to entertain, the idea of a God who was cruel, vengeful, merciless, evil, and malevolent in disposition. He would reject the very supposition with scorn. He would say, No; if there is a God at all, it is certain He is not a Being of this character. To think of God thus is to degrade yourself as well as Him.

Or ask again if it is not permissible to think of God as a Being limited in power, wisdom, foresight, benevolence, the answer will be the same. No; you will be told, if you are to have a God at all, you must think worthily of Him. Such a Being as you describe would not be truly God. The agnostic knows at least enough about God to enable him to say that if there is a God He is not a Being with these finite imperfections. That is just, in other words, to say that what we mean by God —what we have now come to mean by God—is a Being who realises the highest ideal of perfection; and that to attribute to Him contrary qualities would be to destroy His character as God. Here, again, it is not claimed that reason alone could ever have raised us to the full height of this thought of God, or have given us perfect certainty regarding it. It is really revelation that has lifted and purified our thought of God till we now feel we can entertain no lower conception. I know very well there is much in the world to contradict this thought of God as eternally wise and good. I know how often, as we look out upon the

evils of the world, we are tempted to ask if it is, indeed, a God of goodness and equity that permits all this we see. I do not discuss this problem now, but would only say that dark and heavy to bear as is this mystery of sin and sorrow and pain in human life, it would not be lighter, but infinitely heavier, without the faith in a holy, loving God behind it. The removal of God from the government of the world does not lighten any part of this burden, but makes it more difficult to bear, by robbing us of the belief that there is light behind the cloud, infinite wisdom and goodness bringing good out of the evil.

3. Thus far, then, we have gone in answer to the question, What is God? But now, having come thus far, another question arises. Has this God we have described *any relations* to us, or does He take anything to do with us? and if He has relations with us, what are they? In answer to this question, also, reason can carry us a certain way. For, most assuredly, if God is such a Being as I have described, He has, and must have, His relations to men, the most deep and vital of all relations. He

must take to do with us, just as we, whether we will it or not, must take to do with Him. For this God is our Creator; a God in whose hand our breath is, and all our ways; in whom we live and move and have our being; the Creator of the world of which we form a part. And this world which God has made He cannot let out of His hands, but must rule it in every part, and rule it for the highest ends. This is just, in other words, the doctrine of God's providence, which has everywhere been felt to be an essential part of a worthy doctrine of God, and an element in any worthy conception of religion. God has made us human beings in His own image; has endowed us with the rational and moral powers we have; we alone have this resemblance to our Creator. Surely it is a first dictate of reason that He expects us to use these powers in a worthy way, in consonance with the ends for which He has given them, and that He will hold us responsible for the disuse or abuse of them. God, in other words, this infinite, eternal, heart-searching One, cannot be indifferent to right and wrong—though we may sometimes

think He is altogether such an one as ourselves —cannot be indifferent to what we are and do, to whether we fulfil the end of our creation or no. He must show an interest in us, and care over us, must wish us to do right and attain happiness, must desire that we know Himself and have fellowship with Him. Here, again, the Bible chimes in and corroborates that view of God which we feel to be the most worthy of Him.

But just here it is, so far as reason is concerned, that we come to a pause. Just here it is that reason comes very nearly or altogether to the end of its line. It tells that God must have relations to us, but it does not lie within its province to explain clearly what these relations are. It tells us that we ought to be doers of God's will; but it does not, and cannot, discover to us fully what God's will for us is. It tells us that God must desire to have communion with us, and that our highest life lies in that communion or fellowship with God; but it does not of itself put us in communion with God, or show us how to get into it. The elementary religious duties of prayer and

worship, reason may deduce; but it does not draw aside the veil that hides God's face from us, and bring us into living, personal touch with God. It is still an unknown God to whom we build our altar. There is only one way of bridging that gulf between God and man; and that is that God Himself should speak. In all ages, therefore, there has gone up from human hearts this great articulate or inarticulate cry for *revelation* from God. Whoever has been satisfied with what we sometimes call natural revelation, it has not been those who have been left to it. We want—we need—not only assurance, not only fuller light and certainty on all those subjects of which I have already spoken; we want, further, information on what God is in relation to us—how He thinks and feels towards us, and what His will and purpose for us in this world are, and beyond this world too, in another. For in man's heart there whispers the hope—the inextinguishable hope, sometimes the fear—that this life is not his all; that there is another life into which the issues of this life are carried, and which it is the

supreme duty of his existence here to care and prepare for. But only God can answer these momentous questions; man cannot answer them from his own thoughts, nor wrest the answer from any of the ordinary means of information he has around him; and if He be the God we have described—a Being truly personal, truly moral, truly loving; a Being who cares for and loves His moral children—it is inconceivable, it seems to me, that He should not answer them. We could not long continue to believe in a God, we could not long consent to call Him Father, who was content to send His children adrift, launched out on a world full of such riddles, perplexities, and perils as this is, without any higher light for their guidance than that which their own feeble thoughts might yield them.

The difficulty is accentuated by another fact, the darkest and most perplexing that has yet crossed our path. If God is holy, and this world and man are His creation, very evidently the world is not in a state answering to God's idea of it, or His desire

for it. Something has gone wrong. There has emerged something which is not according to God's will, which ought never to have been here, which our deepest moral instincts tell us God can only look on with condemnation and abhorrence. Our own hearts condemn us, and God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. This something which is wrong we are wont to call by the dark and terrible name of *sin*. We dare not make light of it, or weaken it down into some transitory but necessary stage of human development, or tamper with the condemning testimony of our consciences regarding it. But if the world is in such a state of sin, a new problem arises which unaided reason can never solve or even guess at the true solution of. It is the old problem—on the one hand, What is God's relation to sinners? and on the other, How is man to regain his right relations to God? How is he to get out of his wrong relations to God? And to these questions man can never from his own resources find an answer; it is God who must speak, man who must listen.

Thus doubly, triply, we are driven back on revelation for a full answer to our questions about God, and it is the supreme signature of truth upon the revelation of the Bible that it is just such a revelation as answers these questions and meets these very needs. God has not kept silence. He has not estranged Himself from man because of his sin, but has entered into personal, loving, gracious relations with him. He has told us His name, and it 'the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.' The Bible from first to last is but the record of the execution of this great purpose of grace and redemption for a sinful world which God has been working out through all these ages. That purpose culminated, after ages of preparation, in the appearance of His Son, 'the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person,' in the manifestation, and life, and death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to bring about reconciliation between God and man, and in the gift through Christ of the Spirit, to effect

a new creation. Herein is the crowning revelation of the character of God, the most glorious exhibition of all His moral attributes. Herein supremely is love, 'not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'

4. Christ's endearing name for God, the highest of all names, is *Father*. It is the name for God He has given to us, and corresponding to it is the name we are permitted to take towards God—the name of children, of sons. 'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.' With this blessed name of Father, our answer to the question, What is God? approaches its completion. Not yet, however, entirely. Fatherhood has, as its correlative, sonship; and as we early discover from the Gospel, this Fatherhood is not something that has relation solely to believers, or even to humanity, but has its root in the inner life of God Himself. It can hardly escape the notice of even the most superficial, that the name into which we are baptized is, not a single, but a *threefold* name—the name

of Father, Son, and Spirit. We have seen that God is personal, and there is a deep sense in which He must always be spoken of as uni-personal. But the course of God's revelations discovers to us also that He is not uni-personal in the sense of being a lonely, solitary Self, existing through the eternities, dependent for His life of love and fellowship on the finite beings His power might create in time. If in one sense God is uni-personal, in another sense He is tri-personal; His nature unfolds itself, reveals itself, in eternal self-distinction as Father, Son, and Spirit. Of that distinction in the nature of God foregleams were to be expected in the Old Testament, in the economy of our redemption, that this revelation naturally culminates. Our salvation, as the New Testament exhibits it, has not one, but three Divine fountain-heads —God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. In the New Testament these three are ever represented as the Principals in the work of our salvation, and they are united inseparably in a way which excludes the idea that one of them—the Son—is only

human. Our salvation has its complete expression in the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. I do not dwell on this further, but only mention it to show that this idea of the Triune God is not a metaphysical speculation, but enters as an essential part into our full Christian thought of God.

Thus I have sought in brief and imperfect fashion to outline the Biblical answer to the question, What is God? Dare I close without reminding you that if we have to do with God in every sphere and aspect of our lives, most of all have we to do with Him in this surpassing manifestation of His love, furnished in the Gospel of His Son? Here we stand in a position of responsibility to which nothing else is comparable. Nothing can exempt us from the obligation of the immediate and grateful acceptance of the grace brought to us in Jesus Christ, or from the condemnation which must rest on us if that grace is deliberately rejected. It is not God who wills our condemnation, if it should be we are condemned, but we who judge ourselves

unworthy of eternal life. God sent not His Son to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. But if Christ is put aside, nothing else that proceeds from ourselves, or from any other source in time or in eternity, can save us from our sins. Can it be that there is any one hearing me of whom the merciful Saviour will have to say at last—'I would, but you would not; ye would not come unto Me that ye might have life'?

JAMES ORR.

IS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD?

By the Rev.

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IS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD?

RECENT study of the Gospels, which has become increasingly persistent and minute, is placing beyond all question the crucial importance of the great scene at Cæsarea Philippi (Matt. xvi. 13 ff.). For it was here that, in an hour of trial and gloom, Jesus drew the first confession of faith from the Twelve. It would appear that our Lord had sought the leisure of this place for a calm estimate of His position. His ministry had now lasted more than a year, and He wished to ascertain the place He held in the minds of men. What did His contemporaries think of Him? What, above all, did the disciples think of Him? He had no expectation, indeed, that the influential classes —the priests and politicians—had caught the secret of His being; and so it proved in the event. The mass of the people, too, as reported by the disciples, were far from unanimity.

'Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' The mere variety and helplessness of the answers to the great problem were enough to show how completely they were at a loss. Were the Twelve in a similar case? Had they arrived at any clear religious convictions as to the meaning of His life? 'But whom say ye that I am?' And then it was that for himself and for his comrades Peter burst forth in the great words of passionate belief, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'

The reply stirred the soul of Jesus to its depths. For the words in which He hailed Peter's confession are words of extraordinary emotion. He felt, it is clear, that at last the conviction had found voice for which from the beginning He had resolved to wait and work. Now the foundation-stone of the Church could be laid. At last, in this acknowledgment of His person as the object of human faith—this supreme truth about Him put for the first time into human speech—He saw the rock

on which the new religion was to stand invincible for ever. The Gospel was at last a living power among men.

Now the age in which we live, like every age in its own degree, has to come to terms with the Person of Jesus Christ. The mere effort to understand what our religion really is forces upon us the question: Who is this Figure, whom history has once for all set at the heart of the Christian faith, and from whom all its life and power are derived? What was it in Him that won the trust and adoration of the disciples so utterly? What is it in Him that has kept the Church in every age a prisoner to His love and grace? What is it in Him that still is mighty to subdue the hearts of men, and to reconcile sinners to God? These are questions to which every man who takes his relation to the Christian faith seriously must apply his mind, and they can be solved only by those who are willing to look with candid eyes at the facts of history. Christianity is a historical religion, and Jesus has always had a certain place in it: why has that place been given to Him? It is

the object of this lecture to show that it has been given because those whom He has redeemed cannot but see in Him a true Incarnation of God, a personal and satisfying disclosure of the Father, a Divine interposition to bless and save the world. In the words of Paul, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.'

Now, if the Incarnation is a fact, it is scarcely needful to observe that it is incomparably the greatest fact of which we have any knowledge. In some deep sense it is inseparably bound up with our salvation; on its reality and power all things, in this life and the next, depend. Hence the question whether Christ is the Son of God obviously belongs to a quite different class from the question, for instance, whether the planet Mars is inhabited. The Incarnation is not a curiosity; it is a Gospel. In dealing with it we are dealing with a fact that bears directly on our personal destiny. If the nature of Christ was truly Divine, there is nothing in the whole range of human experience that does not somehow become different. Sin, grief, ignorance, death—all dark things have their darkness relieved; hope, faith,

aspiration, love—every noble instinct and desire of humanity is transfigured, and suffused with a certainty of triumph previously unknown. If a Divine Person has been here, if God has lived a human life, taking our burden and carrying our sorrows, it cannot be but that the lot of man, when scanned by those whose eyes are open, should present new and wonderful possibilities. Believing as they believed, knowing what they knew, is it surprising that the writers of the New Testament should have made it the most hopeful book in the world? Surely they had a right to their visions and their dreams. For pessimism withers at the thought that God, to redeem His children, has been manifest in the flesh.

But, some one will say, and say with reason, Can we hope to prove the divinity of Christ on grounds so unanswerable that they compel the assent of every thinking man? Is it possible, in a region of this kind, to forge links of demonstration as strong and cogent as those, say, of mathematics? A single reflection is enough to warn us against indulging hopes of this kind.

No religious belief, be it remembered, can be produced in the human mind by what we may call intellectual violence. The arguments of religion are addressed, not primarily to the reason, but to the emotions and the will; they are concerned with facts of which the heart is judge. And thus the argument for ascribing to Christ a higher nature, while sufficient, is not resistless; it is convincing, perhaps, but not compelling. There is something in it that appeals, and must appeal, to our faculty of choice. Hence we must break once for all with the haunting idea that the avenue to complete Christian faith lies through the forest of intellectual argument. There are thousands of simple believers who could never have come this way, and to whom it would be all unfamiliar ground were they asked to tread it at our bidding. If invited to define their faith in Jesus they would answer, in the words of Père Didon, 'I know not why I believe any more than I know how or why I breathe; but what I see and feel is, that if there be in me any spark of good, any devotion, and any virtue, if I can resist my passions and master

self, if I have any resignation in sorrow and any firm hope, I owe these things to my faith in Jesus Christ.' A faith like this plainly has good reasons of its own—reasons, too, which are entirely valid for the intellect; it believes where as yet it cannot prove, and it can dispense with proof because it lives.

Again, we refuse to follow the path of mere logical inference on the further ground that it is not the path by which belief in Christ's divinity was first arrived at. One has only to read the Gospels attentively to perceive that the disciples' conviction of the higher being of our Lord was a plant of slow growth. It came second, not first. They knew Him as their Saviour ere they divined the secret of His Person. The belief that He was God, which came to full self-consciousness only after the Resurrection, was not the root of saving trust; it was its flower and its crown. It is in this way, too, that we see the evolution of personal belief taking place to-day. It is by the same path of experimental acquaintance with Jesus' power to save that we are led to own Him as what He really is. It is

in virtue of the impression made on us by all that He is in the soul's private life, by what we learn, from day to day, of His personality, His words, His deeds, that we are brought to confess Him as the Son of God. That is to say, this doctrine is not the porch through which we first must pass as we enter the temple of Christian discipleship; it may rather be the last and holiest shrine to which loyal obedience and quickened insight, soon or late, will lead. It is one of the ultimate thoughts or theories to which a Christian man must rise, simply because reason will bring him to formulate his convictions, if only they are firmly grasped, in the language of the intellect. I cannot know myself subdued, pacified, transformed by the influence of Jesus, and not be led to ask, Who then is this, that He has wrought such a work upon me? And so it is clear that the effort to reach a doctrine of the Person of Christ, without believing experience to rest on, is like making bricks without straw, or rather entirely *of* straw. On the other hand, where trust in Jesus as the one Mediator is present and active, the ascription

of Divinity cannot long be withheld. And it is when we have won it from ourselves thus to give to Christ the glory which by right is His, that for the first time we attain to real command over our Christian faith, and implicitly take possession of all that God has freely given us in His Son.

The contention, then, to which the following pages are devoted is this—that the view of the Person of Christ set forth in the Creed is the natural and inevitable issue of a trustful relation to Christ as Saviour. Only I would not be thought to imply that to this great faith there is but one road, a road which all must tread. Men may come to it from every quarter, and led by every variety of motive. In the majority of cases it is a cumulative thing, the beating heart and central core of religious belief, in which innumerable lines converge.

At this point, however, let me state three assumptions that underlie the following argument. As presuppositions they are needful, but not, I think, exorbitant. First, I assume the personality, holiness, and love of God. Obviously it would be absurd to argue that

Christ and God are one, if it were still an open question whether the God represented in the Bible were a reality, and if the discussion might conceivably end in negation or agnostic doubt. Again, I assume not merely that sin is a fact, but that it is what the purest Christian conscience declares it to be—a grim and awful power, a dark, fatal sickness of the soul, inexplicable and incurable by any skill of man. It is only when we have filled conscience and heart and mind with the evil of sin as a personal malady that we are ready to take in all that is meant by the Gospel of a Divine Christ. And, once more, I assume the sinlessness of Jesus. When this is denied at the outset, there is plainly no need to go on. But when it is conceded—and surely, with so vast a volume of immemorial conviction behind us, the concession is not unreasonable—then a fact has been allowed which at once marks this personality as unique. If it be true that, unlike us, Christ had the mirror of the soul within pure and undimmed to the very last, if all these centuries He has faced the world with the unanswerable question on His

lips, Which of you convicteth Me of sin?—then by that very fact He is somehow lifted out of the tainted line of hereditary failure, and we are prepared to recognise a superhuman and unexampled element in His life. But while I have assumed the sinlessness of Jesus in what I have to say, plainly it is not an assumption in the usual sense of the word. Indeed, we may safely assert that no article in the Christian creed is so easy to verify for ourselves, or, when once it has engaged the heart and conscience of a sincere man, more certain to win the recognition and free assent of his intelligence.

The argument on which we are now to enter consists of three parts. First, as the fundamental fact, we have to estimate the self-consciousness of Jesus; secondly, we have to weigh the corroborative testimony of Christian experience; thirdly, a few moments must be given to some considerations of a more general nature which seem to demand the personal advent of God in human life. Once more, then, the question before us, in its broadest terms, may be stated thus, Is Christ merely the subject,

or is He also the object, of religious faith? Are men called not only to believe *like* Him, but to believe *on* Him? And if through the ages the answer of the Church has been that the proper object of Christian faith is to be found in Jesus Christ as God Incarnate, what are our reasons for resting in this tremendous conclusion?

I. *The self-assertion of Jesus Christ*

We begin here because we must begin with history. We are not building an edifice of speculation; we are trying to discover the true explanation of the fact that Christ has been given the place He holds in the highest religion in the world. Is there anything in what He said about Himself that casts light on the problem? If there is, it is our duty not merely not to pass over it, but to make it fundamental and decisive in any judgment we may form. This is our duty, except on the hypothesis—which I take leave to put aside as unworthy of serious consideration—that Jesus did not know who He was, and to the end remained as much in the dark as

to His identity as the rest of the world. On the subject of His own Person, beyond all doubt, Christ spoke with the piercing and decisive insight of immediate knowledge. This is true, or there is no such thing as truth.

The claims of Christ, however, to be justly appreciated, must be viewed against the background of His perfect humility. He knew Himself in a fashion which we can only faintly conceive, and looking into His own soul, He was able to say, 'I am meek and lowly of heart.' Now, when we think of this, it is the more amazing to find Him so constantly preoccupied with His own personality. So singular, indeed, is this preoccupation with self that in any other than Jesus Christ—be it reverently said—it would deserve to be classed as a species of egotism. It is not egotism only if the claims He made for Himself were true. For in that case to speak about Himself was simply to preach the Gospel for a world of sin.

Let us begin with the reiterated claims He made to occupy a peculiar relation to men. I shall not be able to deal separately with every

instance, but this is distinctly a case where a complete enumeration may be dispensed with. The personal demands of Christ are patent in any single example; though certainly one result of the reiteration is to assure us that Jesus' meaning was not misapprehended by His reporters.

In a word, then, it may be said, Jesus claimed to bring God in person to men. This was the secret of His life and the burden of His ministry. It is only in the light of this fact that we can see what is implied in the personal trust and obedience which He never hesitated to ask from His disciples—a trust, incontestably, which went far beyond the limits of what is permissible between one man and another, and involves nothing less than the submission of conscience. It has been pointed out, indeed, that there were stages in the confidence which He invited from those around Him. 'He trained them to trust Himself with an absolute trust—first in His presence, then in His temporary absences, finally under conditions of His spiritual presence.' But this, true as it is, only brings out more clearly the deliberate

purpose with which He had resolved to work such a faith into the stuff and fibre of their souls, as the one lesson of absolute value. Closely linked to this is the demand He made for the complete surrender of self into His hands. His life, indeed, may be described as one long effort to secure the utter self-abandonment of all who professed to be His followers; and apart from this it is plain He would have counted His work a failure. Exclusive allegiance, even to the seeming outrage of natural affection, must be given to Him: 'If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.' No words could be more solemn; yet no words could be more provocative of the deepest perplexity. For they lead us instinctively to reflect that in the moral universe there is one Authority, and one only, who can justly demand this utter sacrifice, one only to whom it can justly be yielded. It is impossible, therefore, to treat this claim to obedience as a fact of no particular moment. It must be dealt with in one of two

ways. Either it must be rejected with moral indignation, or it must be acknowledged with reverential worship. And the recognition of Christ's ethical primacy, the recognition of His unique and unsurpassable authority over conduct, to which an earnest man must surely be led who faces the problem alone with his conscience, and in a quiet hour, is implicitly a confession that He is Divine.

Again, when we turn from what Christ demanded to what He professed to bestow, we are confronted with a situation identical in its issues with that which we have just considered. For the greatest boon offered to men by Jesus, be it remembered, was that of *forgiveness*; and in passing the remark may be made that if He had power to forgive one man, He has power to forgive the whole world. The right is absolute and eternal if it exists at all; the universality of its range is implied in a single example of its use. Now it is a matter of history that Jesus claimed the right, not only to declare forgiveness to sinners—this any believing man may do; but to impart it—which none may do save God. It was the constructive blasphemy

of this assumption that raised the Scribes to angry protest when, on a memorable Sabbath in Capernaum, He absolved the sick of the palsy from sin; but instead of conceding the justice of the charge, He went on to supply an illustration in miracle of His right to speak as He had done. And as if to ensure that His attitude on this point should not be misconceived, Jesus, let us note, advanced a further claim, of the same kind, and yet immensely greater—a claim more stupendous than any we have as yet had before us, and going very near the bounds of credibility. He told the disciples that He was the final Judge of the world. He said to them, and said it again and again, that before Him one day would be gathered not merely His followers, not merely the Jews, but all the nations of the earth, and that in that hour it would be His to pronounce, with absolute insight, absolute justice, absolute power, the doom of every human soul. All other men were to stand before that awful tribunal, but in the seat of judgment He saw the Son of Man.

Once more, think of the place that Jesus

uniformly assigned to His own person in the pictures drawn by Him of the new religion. I do not refer merely to the fact that He Himself is the text and centre of that portion of His teaching which has sunk deepest into the heart of the world. No one can fail to mark how Christ holds forth to men, not a theology, not a scheme of life, but His own great personality; nor can any one fail to observe that this is precisely the element in His gospel that has proved itself able to evoke and satisfy the faith of sinners. But the phenomena of which I am speaking now are less conspicuous than this, yet quite as significant. Consider, for example, the way in which Jesus spoke of Himself as the goal and termination of the long preparatory labour of the Spirit of God, stretching far back in Old Testament times. It may be justly said that the whole burden of His message lies in the words with which He opened His sermon in the Synagogue at Nazareth: 'This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears.' Consider the authoritative fashion in which He deals with the most hallowed rite of the Jewish nation, the Passover, putting it aside as an exhausted type,

an antiquated shadow, to be swept away and forgotten, since He, the great reality and substance, has appeared; and saying with majestic prevision as He gazed all down the ages, 'Do *this* in remembrance of Me.' Consider the staggering pretensions that may be heard as an undertone in memorable words, so often read without any sense of their profound implications: 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me.' How great must this Man be, if service to the weak and suffering, in all places and at all times, is service done to Him!

Turning now to another side of the question, let us note that Jesus uniformly claims to stand in a unique personal relation to God. In one sense, indeed, there is in this nothing strange or surprising. It is natural that He should assert some such prerogative; else the attitude He took up toward His fellow men had been a blank and repellent mystery. In the light of the absolute range of authority and command presupposed, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount, it is a positive relief to learn that Christ described Himself as being

one with God, identified with the Father, in a way for ever impossible to any other. It is indeed true that on this point our Lord exercised a great measure of reticence. In His teaching it was not so much heard, as overheard. Only, it is quite clear that nothing else was natural, or indeed possible, at the time. The truth of Jesus' Sonship was not one that could be imposed as a dogma on the minds of the Twelve. It must be allowed to break gradually upon them as they followed Him from day to day. It could not be taught or told in formal doctrine; it must be divined by the insight of the heart. As they marked the progress of these sinless years, as they heard ever more clearly in His voice the tones of a higher world, as they beheld the strange and unexampled closeness of His intimacy with God, and felt its awe, impressions as to the secret of His being could not but arise in their minds; and these impressions it remained for Christ to guide and shape into conclusions of a true and worthy kind.

Nor was this guidance withheld. He deliberately led them to think of Him as the Son of God in a new and wonderful sense. He

constantly spoke of God as 'My Father'; and though one of the most sublime and precious elements in the teaching of Jesus is the revelation of a Divine 'Fatherhood' whose care and love encircle the world, no confusion is for one moment suffered to intrude between this wider and more universal meaning of the term, and the meaning which Jesus reserves to Himself alone. Various writers have pointed out that He uniformly kept up the distinction between the phrases, 'My Father' and 'your Father,' never joining the Twelve in their use of 'our Father'—not even in the Lord's Prayer, which is a series of petitions intended for His disciples, not a form of which He made personal use. But at times He spoke out still more plainly, reserve being laid aside. He did so in the express declaration, the authenticity of which it is impossible to question: 'All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father, and no one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.' He did so in a variety of similar words, of which the Fourth Gospel

has preserved the record, as when He said, 'I and the Father are one'; 'I am in the Father, and the Father in Me'; 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' And the meaning which others drew from this claim to be, in some peculiar sense, the Son of God, may be seen from the storm of indignation excited by it in the Sanhedrim, or from the mocking cries addressed to Him upon the bitter cross. It was far more than a metaphor; and if even the Jews somehow perceived that everything hung on its truth or falsity, still more did the disciples. It was a solemn and unfaltering affirmation that the secret of His being lay in a unique and essential relation to God, that He had come forth from God, and that His words and deeds were in reality the words and deeds of God. And that this claim was not only made verbally, but fulfilled and certified in His experience, is clear from the glimpses, neither few nor dim, which the Gospels afford us of His inner life. His relation to the Father, as there disclosed, is one of unbroken harmony and blessed fellowship, of perfect mutual knowledge, of unclouded fearlessness, without a trace

of misgiving, or compunction, or regret. Not only so; at the supreme and crucial moments of His career, the consciousness that He and the Father were one rose into triumphant certainty, and broke forth in words of a solemn joy that fill the subdued soul of the listener, to this hour, with deep and reverential trust.

Is it credible that one so good and wise as Jesus Christ should have failed to divine the thoughts which these claims, and others like them, must inevitably awaken in the minds of devoted followers? Is it credible that what is transparently clear to us, as we look back, was then invisible to Him? I cannot believe it. There is no reasonable doubt that from the first He perceived what the result of His words and bearing must ultimately be, and that with the prospect full in view He deliberately fostered the incipient worship of the Twelve. And so when he accepted the adoration of Thomas, kneeling at His feet with the cry, 'My Lord and my God,' this was but to pursue consistently the path on which He had been moving from the first. If it is true that He came out from the Father, if His personality

was in very deed the presence of God in human life, such an acceptance of the glory due to God alone is just and right; but if not—if in the last resort He was but the greatest of the children of men —what shall we say? Are we not face to face with the alternative, as old as the Christian faith itself, that in Jesus we have to deal either with superhuman authority or with superhuman vanity and sin? 'Thoughtful men,' says Bishop Gore, 'generally view with distrust the dilemma as a form of argument. . . . But after all there are dilemmas, though they may not be many, the force of which grows upon us the more we consider them; the dilemma based upon the claim of Jesus Christ is one of these.' For the pretensions which He put forward, with ever-deepening solemnity, to be the final and sufficient revelation of saving love to man, become an intolerable difficulty except as confirmed and justified by the Divine origin of His life and mission. The self-consciousness of Jesus, the account He gave of Himself, is, on any terms, wonderful in its coherence, in its complex unity, in its spiritual range and grandeur. There had never been

anything like it in the world before; there has never been anything like it since. And if this Divine Sonship, from which the river of salvation has flowed, is to be rejected as the poor delusion of blind ignorance or infatuated pride, then

> 'The pillared firmament is rottenness,
> And earth's base built on stubble.'

II. *The Witness of Experience*

In the second place, we have to inquire whether this stupendous claim, personally made, as we have seen, by Jesus of Nazareth, is confirmed by the experience of Christian men. I think it will conduce to clearness if we begin by examining the witness of the Apostles. Not that their words possess any legal or external authority. There is no such thing in religion, at all events in Christianity. But we shall do wisely to interrogate the men who were on the spot, and who proved by their after life that they had the mind of Christ. They had lived close to Him; they had been suffused by His influence; and it is mere per-

versity not to concede that the Apostles have a right to be listened to when they tell of the influence of Jesus upon them.

It is obvious, as we read the New Testament, that the first Christians were conscious that they enjoyed the presence of the Risen Lord, always and everywhere. His life and power, as they believed, had been freed by the Resurrection and Ascension from certain restrictions of space and time, and become available for all men in a wholly new degree. Not only was He the goal of yearning anticipation; He was the object of immediate trust. His love inspired their life; and so firmly did they lean upon it that death became nothing more terrible than falling asleep. To come to particulars—a quarter of a century after the Resurrection, in the first verse of the oldest Christian writing we possess, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians—the glorified Jesus is, so to say, bracketed in dignity with God the Father: 'The Church of the Thessalonians,' we read, 'which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.' St. Paul was a Jew; and of the Jews it has been said that monotheism

ran like a passion in their blood. Yet this Jewish Apostle has no scruples about placing these names side by side; indeed, he assumes that his readers, recent converts as they were, so completely shared the Christian estimate of the Saviour's person, that a passing allusion to the place of the Son beside the Father was sufficient to explain itself. Two other phenomena in this short letter are significant. More than twenty times in three or four pages Jesus is called 'the Lord.' That is no longer a mere title of human authority; it is the equivalent of the Old Testament name 'Jehovah,' and the process of its transference to Jesus of Nazareth is complete. Then, besides that, in this letter prayer is addressed to Jesus directly. It contains the petition, introduced with the utmost simplicity, such as would have been impossible had it been a new or unfamiliar mode of expression, 'May our God and Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.' It need hardly be said that this is but one instance out of many in the New Testament, in which prayer is offered not merely in the name of Christ, but directly *to* Christ. So universal

indeed was the practice that one mode of describing Christians was to speak of them as those that called upon the name of Jesus. The Book of Acts relates that the first common prayer offered by a company of disciples was addressed to Jesus. Converts were uniformly baptized into Jesus' name. The earliest Christian hymns were sung to His praise. To the attentive student of the Bible these are commonplace truisms; and yet how are we to describe such phenomena, except by saying that they mean the ascription to One—with whom, in some cases, the speakers had lived on the closest terms of human intimacy—not of the mythological honours of deification, but of full, eternal, and inherent Godhead, in unity with the Father? Not, of course, that the average Christian of these primitive days is to be credited with a fully developed scheme of doctrine. As it has been put, 'Christ was believed to be Divine, and adored as Divine, before He was clearly taught to be Divine.' It was only natural that men should live themselves into the doctrine, and base their practice on it, long before it appealed to their instinct of theoreti-

cal analysis. But from the first, it is clear, the Divinity of Christ could not be asserted in worship and repudiated in theology. Creatures cannot permanently adore a fellow-creature—at least for Christians, whose faith has its roots in the sublime monotheism of the Old Testament, the thing is sheerly impossible. Conversely, once the point had been raised, believers could not continue to adore One whose being, in the last resort, they held to be no more than human; and therefore we are not surprised to find that all the great controversies about the person of Christ, in so far as they touched the ordinary member of the Church, really hinged on this point—worship or no worship.

No competent scholar, however, would demur to the assertion that in the New Testament, and ever since, what is tantamount to Divine honour is paid to the Lord Jesus. It may be taken as certain that the doctrine of His higher nature, in its essential lines, was not the product of a slow evolution, gathering strength little by little as the remembrance of the Apostles faded; it was from the first a settled principle of the new religion, and a

vital element in the distinctiveness and originality of its message to the world. This is the parent spring from which the stream of later Christology flowed. It is true, no doubt, that its course was confused, and its waters defiled, by the tributaries it received later from the boundless arrogance and incredible artificiality of speculation, when theology had become all but indifferent to the facts of history. But the point on which, at present, we have to fix our minds, is that all these centuries Jesus Christ has been worshipped as Divine. From the day when Pliny reported to the Emperor Trajan that it was the custom of the sect called Christians to gather before sunrise, and 'sing a hymn of praise to Christ, as it were to God'; from the day when a second-century writer began his nameless homily with the words, 'Brethren, we ought so to think of Jesus Christ as of God, as of the Judge of quick and dead'—from that day until now it has been held fast as the priceless secret of the Christian faith that in Jesus of Nazareth, who died upon the Cross, the Son of God took flesh, and became man, that He might bring us

to the Father. This continuity of witness is itself a supremely important fact. Surely we must concede to the Christian mind the right to say what Christianity really is. And if this religion has never existed in the world, except on the basis of this belief, those who would now deprive us of it in the name of latter-day enlightenment must be told, and told plainly, that the expurgated faith which they design to establish in place of the ancient creed is utterly devoid of historical foundation, and hopelessly out of line with that age-long belief in the Incarnation which, in its calm strength, has not only outlasted the storms of doubt and persecution, but has been the inspiration of the purest and saintliest lives ever seen upon the earth. Coleridge, the author of many profound sayings, has never said anything profounder or more decisive than this—that while a Unitarian may be a Christian, Unitarianism is not Christianity.

Still, no religious doctrine, least of all one so central as the doctrine of the Incarnation, can be accepted solely on the ground of tradition, not even if it has behind it the unbroken

testimony of the Church in every age. Let us briefly inquire, therefore, how far it is true that faith in the Divinity of Jesus springs, by a natural and unforced development, out of our own Christian experience. Are there reasons which constrain *us* to accept the truth of the Incarnation? For if this be a truth which sooner or later makes its way into the believing mind, we may justly summon ourselves as competent witnesses on the point.

Now the age in which we live, although not in love with ideas, yet reverences facts, and has a genuine respect for *forces*. Hence the modern mind is peculiarly capable of being impressed by the undiminishing reality of the influence of Jesus upon men. This influence, coming as it does to console, teach, rebuke, inspire His followers, is essentially a personal force; it is different in kind from that which is so often posthumously felt in the case of great men. Now, if I feel this influence, as I do, it is part of my conviction that it is real to feel also that it is being exerted not on me only, but on every willing and receptive soul. It may be said, of course, that to believe this is a mere

subjective fancy, resting on no solid ground. But it is not so. I can point to the promise of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Gospels, in which He said that He would be present with His people, and present *thus*, to the very end of the world. And the consenting witness of Christians in all ages exists to prove that His word has not been broken. Such an influence, ceaseless, personal, embracing the world, unsealing the inmost chambers of the soul, is in its very nature a thing impossible to One who was only a finite human being like his neighbour. We are compelled to say that it is in virtue of His oneness with God that Jesus Christ has entrance to the heart of man.

Once more, the influence of Jesus upon men is of a quite precise and specific kind. It has various aspects, indeed, and these may be described in various terms; but the substance and core of it is that through Him, and what He has done, we sinners are reconciled to God. Theories of the Atonement need not delay the progress of the argument just now; I am speaking of something that is an indisputable reality, no matter what view we take of that

stupendous theme. For every Christian knows that it is through Jesus that our sins are forgiven. Every Christian knows that it is through Jesus that we have access to God, and are brought near to the very touch and breathing of the Father's love. The shame and defilement of evil are removed by His power. The likeness of Christ, in a real measure, is engraved on the hearts of thousands—on hearts that, for His sake, have passed through the cleansing fires of penitence, and have been shaped and fashioned anew by His presence within. He lifts them into a new world of courage, peace, and joy, such as they had never inhabited before; such as before they had not known to exist. He brings them there, and there He makes their home. These are facts which experience has made perfectly familiar to all believers.

But we can go further, and say more. A deeper secret still remains. Perhaps it might be stated thus—that in our sacredest feeling and thought, and in the most hallowed moments of personal religion, God and Christ cease to be two, and come to be merged in one. When in

secret, in the hour of meditation, we strive to look into the face of God, it is the face of Christ that rises before us. To love Christ is now but another name for loving God. He bids us follow Him, with an absolute surrender of the will; and when we loyally answer His command, it is to find that obedience to Him is one with obedience to God.

These experiences, it is clear, are of the nature rather of problems than of final answers. They suggest that we cannot go thus far without going further yet. If Christ is thus all to men that God could be, if He satisfies the needs of the soul, and stills the cry of the conscience for pardon and holiness, then it is impossible for a reasonable mind to ponder His influence without being led to certain conclusions as to His nature. He is this *to us*, we say; then what must He be in Himself? It is through Jesus that salvation comes; yes, but salvation is all of a piece; it cannot come half from heaven and half from earth; it must be wholly and only from God. It is through Jesus that men are delivered from sin; but is this credible regarding One who rose from the common sinful level

of humanity? It is to Jesus that saintly men trace their victory and their hope; suggest to them that they should trace it instead to God, and they will reply that to their minds there is no difference. And here their instinct guides them right; 'it is a weary way to God, but a wearier far to any demi-god.' We can draw the life that is divine only from One who had life divine in Himself. The grace that sent salvation and the grace that brought it must in the end be the same. We can touch and grasp the God we long for, only in the personality of One who has put the Father within our reach because He came from the Father's heart. The lips which speak forgiveness to the world must possess the inherent power to forgive. These things—life, grace, forgiveness—are unspeakably great and unspeakably precious; well, if we owe them all to Jesus Christ (and unless we do, to speak of our attachment to Him as religion is pure superstition), then to refuse Him the name of God is to leave our human vocabulary without a term by which to describe Him. Hence, in the light of facts like these—facts as real as the sense of

right and wrong, facts charged with a power to hallow and elevate the soul of which that sense, alas! too often is devoid—it is clear that to affirm the Divinity of Jesus Christ, so far from being a gratuitous and unfounded speculation, is but a reasonable statement of the faith by which all Christians live.

III. *Some Antecedent Considerations*

Are there any reflections of an antecedent kind, we may ask as we hasten to a close, which lend colour and support to the conclusions we have reached? Do needs and longings exist in the human heart to which the truth of the Incarnation ministers the satisfaction they require, but which, apart from it, are only too likely to excite the dull pain of bewildered uncertainty, or even hopeless resentment? Such needs, I believe, are many and profound; but at present I will speak only of one of them, which may be viewed as suggesting and embracing the rest. It is the need for an infinite love. The heart, with its yearning for God and its sense of guilt and separation from Him, when confronted with the tale of love

and atonement for which the Incarnation is but a briefer name, instinctively feels the answer that is here to its own inmost longing, and decides that 'it cannot be a fiction, but must be a fact.' Or in other words, if Jesus is Divine, we have an assured and final answer to the question *whether God is love.* Who will say that this assurance is given by the world as it lies before us day by day? How dark are the mysteries of human life! How undeserved the pain, how fruitless the labour, which falls to the lot of 'a great multitude that no man can number'! And how deep the misgivings, the more terrible for their silence, that in view of these things visit the thoughtful mind, and go near to impeach the relations of God to the creatures He has made! Nor when we turn from the world, and re-enter our own heart, is this uncertainty relieved. For there a ceaseless conflict of good and evil rages; and in the dark and desperate struggle with temptation the fainting soul too often is driven to cry, in its perplexity, that God cares nothing for our rise or fall. To say these things is not to capitulate to pessimism; it is but to recog-

nise openly that there is such a thing as the problem of evil, and that the problem is one enormous gravity.

Is there an answer to these bewildering enigmas? Are we in a position, is Christianity in a position, to furnish adequate relief to those who, under the stress of suffering, are learning to doubt the goodness of God? May not the despairing and forsaken victims of cosmic process or human cruelty protest, if the light of nature be our only guide, that life had better never been, since for all our distress it is vain to look for aid to 'a Power too strong for us to control, too callous for us to soften, too far for us to reach, deaf to supplication, blind to pain'? Yes; and to such passionate cries for light and hope, I know but one conviction from which there may be drawn a full and coherent reply; it is that which claims for Jesus of Nazareth the title Immanuel—*God with us.* If God, in very truth, has interposed to share our lot, to bear the Cross that justly had been ours, to live our life and to die our death—then, and then only, its poison is removed from human grief, and its hopeless-

ness from human sin. For the Gospel of the Divine Christ is there to show not only that God is love, but that He did not withhold the last and highest service love can render—to stoop and suffer for the lost. Thus the Eternal, whom in Christ we worship, is no remote Creator, watching afar off the ills and agony of the world. For our sakes He came amongst us, subject to the conditions of our lot, subject even to death; and now the gulf which had severed earth from heaven is spanned by the living bond of Incarnation. And if what the hearts of men long for most of all is to know that God is love, and love to them, Christianity would urge that this unspeakable truth, in face of all things that seem to render it incredible, is made certain, once and for ever, by the Advent and the Cross of the only-begotten Son.

It is probable that these lines may pass under the eye of some for whom faith in the Divinity of Jesus is an object of earnest or wistful desire, not a possession of glad certainty. May I venture to speak to them one word of counsel? They must not permit this difficulty to hide from them the face of Christ

Himself. We have to resist the temptation, the subtle and recurrent temptation, to shelve the claims of Christ to our allegiance, on the plea that the problems of His person are so incomprehensibly obscure. Whatever more He may be, Jesus is at all events the messenger of God to men, come forth from the very heart of all things to disclose the secret of the unseen, and bearing a message of infinite compassion, infinite love. Therefore, given resolute sincerity, a man can know Jesus Christ for what He really is. He can verify His claims—His claims that will not be put by—to be Saviour and Lord; he can test them in the daily experience of life and struggle, of work and prayer. Let him fill his mind with the teaching of Christ, let him believe in Christ for the pardon of sin, let him obey Christ as the Lord of conscience and will, let him draw from Christ the power to live in fellowship with God, and all the knowledge and insight that are requisite will ere long be his. 'Nature never did betray the heart that loved her'; and to the faithful disciple of His Son God will make light to arise.

It may prove, however, that light and con-

viction upon this theme do not come by way of theoretical argument. Argument counts for much less in matters of personal religion than is commonly supposed. An obedient life answers best; even as the Master said long ago: 'If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.' And thus an earnest man may feel it to be his first duty to avert his eyes from what appear the unprofitable subtleties of Christian theology, the better to lead the Christian life. Let him take this path; let him 'do His will'; and then, as the friendship and mastery of Jesus brings more and more of the divine life into his heart, he will gain an increasingly profound assurance that to hail this Son of Man as God manifest in the flesh is but to give Him His right name. For it is thus that God deals with seekers after truth; they come to know more, as they grow worthy to know it. And when once our eyes are opened to the wonder and glory of this Jesus, and we face the indubitable fact that He has saved, and is saving us, from sin and guilt, from doubt and fear, the rest will be easy.

Reason will follow where the heart has led. By putting the Christian life into practice, our grasp of its sufficiency and truth will grow stronger and more sure. He whom experience has shown us to be the Light of the World, and the Shepherd of the souls of men, will certify Himself to us inwardly and progressively as God Incarnate. Until at last, with the full assurance of a settled faith, and the quickened insight of obedient love, we take up as our own the adoring words of the ancient hymn :—

> 'Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ,
> Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.'

H. R. Mackintosh.

DID CHRIST RISE FROM THE DEAD?

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DID CHRIST RISE FROM THE DEAD?

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is not merely the greatest event in history: it is the hinge on which all history turns. Our view of the past and of the future must be entirely altered if it should be made out that He did not rise from the dead. As Paul saw and declared: 'If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain.' If Christ died and in that 'lorn Syrian town' lies in His grave like other men, then the whole gospel of the Apostles falls to the ground, for the glad tidings they proclaimed was that the Lord whom they had known and loved had risen from the dead and was now alive at the centre of power. No wonder that they found this event the turning-point in their own spiritual history, making certain all

which had been dubious, throwing light on all that had gone before, crowning their Lord as true King of men, and opening a prospect of quite overwhelming brightness.

The religion of Christ is communion with a Risen Lord. The belief which distinguishes the Christian from all other faiths is the belief that Jesus is now conscious and supreme—that He is, in a word, the Christ who has represented God on earth and now represents Him among men. If His personal, individual life terminated on the Cross, and if He remains in blank and impotent unconsciousness until now, then it is plain He can no longer afford us the help which the Apostles declared they received from Him. He cannot hear our prayer; He cannot impart to us the aid which a living and present and powerful Person can impart. It is only as a memory we can cherish the life He led, and from it derive some stimulus towards righteousness.

Moreover, if Christ is not risen, then His word has failed; for He said He would rise. And if His word has failed in this, it may have failed in every particular. Doubt is cast

upon all His utterances—in so far as they are not verified in our own experience—if He was mistaken regarding His own future and His relation to God.

In short, remove the Resurrection of Christ, prove it to be unhistorical, the delusive fancy of the disciples, and the entire Christian creed crumbles, and we lose our strongest evidence of the supernatural in the life of our Lord. As Strauss perceived, the Resurrection is the centre of the centre, the real heart of Christianity as it has been until now. Or, as one of the ablest of his opponents puts it, 'The Resurrection created the Church, the Risen Christ made Christianity; and even now the Christian faith stands or falls with Him. . . . If it be proved that no living Christ ever issued from the tomb of Joseph, then that tomb becomes the grave not of a man but of a religion, with all the hopes built on it and all the splendid enthusiasms it has inspired.'

It is the resurrection of Jesus that establishes a clear and close connection between this world and the unseen spiritual world. If Jesus rose from the dead, then the world into which

He has passed is a real and living world, and His invitation to us to join Him there is one we may confidently trust. If He conquered death, then there is an Unseen Spirit mightier than the strongest material forces, a God who is on our side against all evil. If, on the other hand, belief in the Resurrection is baseless, if the body of Jesus rotted away in the grave like all others, if He was held fast in the grim silence of death, then, although His ideal life remains, yet materialists may urge, with a force that is not easily resisted, that material laws are supreme, that Nature is God, and that beyond the limits Nature imposes we have no outlook at all.

The importance, then, of coming to some decision regarding this significant event cannot be exaggerated. But at the outset of our inquiry our way is barred by the assertion that no amount of evidence can establish a fact which is miraculous. To discuss here and now the possibility of miracle, or its credibility, is impossible. It may suffice to remark that if we take up this position we are only thrown on a more fatal horn of the

dilemma. For we have to account for the stupendous moral miracle—the miracle, I mean, that those who had the best means of ascertaining the truth, and every inducement to ascertain it, should all have been deceived, and that this deception should have been the most fruitful source of good, not only to them but to the whole world. And, moreover, this event may, for all we know, be reducible to law. Like the visit of a comet, resurrection after thirty-six hours burial may only have happened once in the world's history, because only once have the conditions of such resurrection been fulfilled. The Resurrection of Christ is unique, because He is unique. Find another person bearing the same relation to God and living the same life, and you will find a similar resurrection. So far from being erratic, unreasonable, lawless, the Resurrection of Christ is really the sole interpreter of many otherwise unintelligible mysteries.

However this be, it cannot be affirmed that the Resurrection is a mere prodigy, lying outside the ascertained order of nature, a prodigy which has no significance for us. So far from

lying outside the system of things in which we live, that system is maimed, imperfect, and unintelligible without it. It is not isolated and heterogeneous, but closely connected with the highest human interests and with the physical facts of life and death. And the practical understanding of men has brought the Resurrection of Christ into the most significant and helpful relation to what is of universal and paramount importance.

Another preliminary obstacle must be removed. It is commonly said that the Resurrection of Christ is a great truth, if by that you mean that His Spirit survived death and now lives in us. But the bodily resurrection is of no account. Not from the risen body flows the power that has altered human history, but from the teachings and life of Christ, and from the dedication of that life even to death in the interests of humanity. Christ lay in His grave, and the elements of His body have passed into the bosom of nature as ours will before long, but His Spirit was not enclosed in the grave; it is living. Harnack (*What is Christianity*, p. 161), *e.g.*

says: 'The Easter faith is the conviction that the Crucified One gained a victory over death; that God is just and powerful; that He who is the firstborn among many brethren still lives.' 'Whatever may have happened at the grave and in the matter of the appearances, one thing is certain: This grave was the birthplace of the indestructible belief that death is vanquished, that there is a life eternal.' 'Wherever, despite all the weight of nature, there is a strong faith in the infinite value of the soul; wherever death has lost its terrors; wherever the sufferings of the present are measured against a future of glory, this feeling of life is bound up with the conviction that Jesus Christ has passed through death, that God has awakened Him and raised Him to life and glory.' 'It was a life never to be destroyed which they had felt to be proceeding from Him.' Similarly, Herrmann says: 'We cannot think of the personal life of Jesus as something that could ever be given over to annihilation.' 'If the true work of God be to bring the Person of Jesus to perfection, then the same faith which sees that

God is present, must also grasp the thought that Jesus lives now, perfected and freed from all earthly limits' (*Communion with God*, p. 222).

This view has been very well put by one of the most reasonable of critics, who ascribes 'the great myth of Christ's bodily revival to the belief on the part of the disciples that such a soul could not become extinct. In a lesser way the grave of a beloved friend has been to many a man the birthplace of his faith; and it is obvious that in the case of Christ every condition was fulfilled which would raise such sudden conviction to the height of passionate fervour. The first words of the disciples to one another on that Easter morn may well have been, "He is not dead: His Spirit is this day in Paradise among the sons of God."' Quite so: they, of course, believed that His Spirit was in Paradise; and for that very reason fully expected to find his body in the tomb. No ordinary visit to a grave, nor any ordinary results flowing from such a visit, throws light on this case; for in ordinary circumstances sane men do not

believe that their friends are restored to them and are standing in bodily palpable shape before them.

Renan goes one step further, and gives an instance in which religious excitement produced effects which he thinks analogous. His words are: 'To Jesus was to happen the same fortune which is the lot of all men who have riveted the attention of their fellow-men. The world, accustomed to attribute to them superhuman virtues, cannot admit that they have submitted to the unjust, revolting, iniquitous law of the death common to all. At the moment in which Mahomet expired, Omar rushed from the tent, sword in hand, and declared that he would hew down any one who should dare to say that the prophet was no more. . . . Heroes do not die. What is true existence but the recollection of us which survives in the hearts of those who love us? For some years this adored Master had filled the little world, by which He was surrounded, with joy and hope; could they consent to surrender Him to the decay of the tomb? No; He had lived too entirely in those who

surrounded Him, that they could but affirm that He was still living' (*Les Apôtres*, p. 3).

Renan is careful not to remind his readers that the uproar occasioned by Omar's announcement was at once stilled by the calm voice of Abu Bekr, who also came forth from the death-bed of the prophet with the memorable words: 'Whoso hath worshipped Muhammad, let him know that Muhammad is dead: but whoso hath worshipped God, that the Lord liveth and doth not die.'

The great critic also omits to notice that none of the Apostles said, like Omar, that their Master was not dead; they admitted His death, and felt it keenly; and it is vain to attempt to confound things essentially distinct, the assertion of a matter of fact—that the Lord had risen again—with the sentimental or regretful resuscitation of a person's image in the hearts of his surviving friends.

Yet this theory that the Resurrection of Jesus, or the appearance to the disciples, is merely the form which their sense of His superhuman greatness assumed has in it much

that is attractive. His vitality, His fulness of life, and power to dispense it to them, had so impressed itself upon them, that after the first shock of the crucifixion and burial, their minds were again filled with this dominating sense of His inexhaustible, inextinguishable life. That critics, commonly reckoned and styled unbelieving, should pay so unparalleled a tribute to Christ's greatness is itself remarkable, and must be accepted as convincing evidence of the justness of His claim to be the life of the world. The disciples had seen Him arrested, pinioned, and carried off, like a common thief: some of them had seen Him in the hands of the soldiers, subjected to every device of mockery and outrage, bleeding, pale, dazed, faint; they had seen Him at last crucified; hanging, a corpse, on the gallows; they knew that His dead body had responded to no endearments spent on it, but had remained cold, silent clay, and had been hopelessly laid aside to pass through the ordinary humiliating process of decay. Yet almost before a day had been given them to recover from this shock, they were found exulting in His risen

life—so profound was their sense that life and He were identical.

Now certainly the truth that lies at the heart of such a theory is *in its own place* most valuable. Perhaps it is not going too far to say that unless the disciples had received during the life of Jesus this intense faith in His power to give life, they could not have been persuaded by almost any appearance that He had risen. But when it is maintained that their belief in the Resurrection was no more than a persuasion that He continued in life, it must be said that not only is this inconsistent with the account given us in the gospels, but especially that this theory misses the point; it has been elaborated under a misapprehension; it proposes to account for that which does not need to be accounted for—the continuance of His Spirit in life—and leaves out of account the crux of the whole matter—the resurrection of His body.

For the disciples did not need to be assured that Jesus was immortal. Not one of them had any doubt of that. Had He *not* reappeared they might have speculated as to the parti-

cular receptacle of souls to which His Spirit had been consigned; but that His Spirit somewhere lived, there would have been no doubt expressed among them. What they must have questioned day by day and hour by hour, was quite a different thing, viz.: whether after all He was the Messiah. They had no need of evidence to assure them that His was the lot of all good men, and that somewhere in God's universe He was alive and happy: they needed evidence that He was different from all other men, that He was approved by God as His Christ. It was His rejection by the authorities and His death at their hands that had blighted their hope. How could the Messiah, the great King who was to have all power and authority, have been so helpless, and have actually been crucified as an impostor? The Resurrection was the reversal of the judgment of the Sanhedrin, and as such the disciples at once hailed it. Had nothing happened to show that God owned His Son, and had accepted His sacrifice, and set Him above all powers; had their last experience of Jesus been the awful words, 'My God, my God,

why hast Thou forsaken me,' doubt and dismay must have overwhelmed them.

It may be said that the Messiahship of Jesus had already been proved by the incontrovertible facts of His life; by His sinlessness, His compassion, His attitude towards God and men—and that is true, and for us it is easy to perceive and use that evidence. But for the disappointed and bewildered disciples it was not so easy. And, besides, apart altogether from the subsequent appearances, the Resurrection itself seems a necessary part of the Messianic programme. The Messiah must not be left under any bondage to the world. He must be victorious over man's last enemy, and must enter on His reign in the complete manhood of a perfected body and spirit.

We accept then the *truth* which this theory brings to the front. We believe that no one is likely to believe in the Resurrection who has not been so impressed by the personality presented in the Gospels as to be persuaded that somehow life dwells in Him for all men. The Resurrection is misapprehended so long as it is viewed as a separate and detached

phenomenon. It is a solid and necessary part of the entire Messianic manifestation. It is not the rising again of an individual man we are here confronted with. It is the rising again of *the Christ*, of Him who had founded God's kingdom and been put to death because He had claimed to be the representative of God. It was impossible that His earthly career could close with His death, that the curtain should fall in the darkness of Calvary, that His followers should be left in doubt whether, after all, God owned him as the Christ. No doubt the Resurrection brought life and immortality to light in a fashion before unthought of; but this was secondary: its main and primary function and effect was not to prove the immortality of the soul, but to set the crown and seal upon the whole work of Jesus as the Christ.

This construction of the origin of the belief in the Resurrection which we have now considered is often held along with the theory commonly known as the vision-theory. 'The disciples believed they saw Jesus, because they were already persuaded He was alive.'

This theory has been so frequently discussed, and, as was thought, exploded, that much need not be said about it. Schmiedel (Art. 'Resurrection,' *Encyc. Bibl.*), however, seems to consider it worthy of resurrection, and with much elaboration and ability argues in its favour. While reading his clever and specious pleading, one may be disposed to think it possible that the disciples saw what they wished to see. But no sooner do we turn to the Gospel narratives and allow common sense to have its say, than we see how extremely improbable such a theory is. If there is any truth in the narratives at all, then the last thing any of the disciples expected was to see the Lord. So little did they expect to see Him that they did not recognise Him when He appeared, and would not believe others when they reported that they had seen Him. The vision-theory might be accepted had there been but one appearance to be accounted for. It is credible that in the dim dawn a passing figure might have suggested the lost Master, but appearance after appearance occurred, and this not of a

fleeting ghost but of one who talked and eat with the disciples. Are we to believe that the five hundred who believed were all the dupes of fancy? Their belief was questioned, they were not allowed to dream that they had seen Him, but were driven back on the reality by the unbelief of others. That so many persons of various dispositions, and in various circumstances, and at different times should all have been persuaded that they had seen the Lord and spent some time in His company, that they should have taken upon themselves the responsibility of proclaiming Jesus as Christ to the world on this ground that they had seen Him alive after His passion; that none of them should have gone to the grave to verify their belief in a resurrection, or that none of those whose interest it was to demolish their belief should have done so, is, if not absolutely incredible, certainly in the highest degree improbable. To me it seems incredible that men whose whole life and eternity depended upon it, should not have got at the very truth, when the truth was so easy to get at. Among the many

thousands who in these first days believed that Jesus had risen, there must surely have been several who, having at hand in the same city the means of ascertaining the truth, would certainly take the trouble to discover it. Put yourself in the place of these men. The grave is a mile off. Can you conceive it possible that you should not go and find out the truth about it?

Wernle, following Keim, seems to think it possible that the visions were somehow communicated by the risen Lord. That Jesus 'may have helped by means of His appearance to enable His disciples to recover from their perplexity,' or, as Keim says, they (the appearances) were a kind of telegraphic despatch from the risen Lord. But if it be admitted that our Lord was in a position to influence thus the minds of His disciples; if He meant to convey to them the *impression* that He was risen, then He *was* risen; and if He had power to convey to them this impression, then He had that sovereignty over mind and matter which is all that any one claims for Him in this connection.

All vision-theories, and theories that assert that the idea of resurrection was begotten by the impression of vitality He had made while living on earth, are exploded by the empty grave. For the theory that the disciples merely fancied they saw the risen Lord implies that the body still rested in the tomb. It has always therefore been a problem how to account for the empty grave. Nothing need be said of the obsolete suggestions that our Lord was never truly dead, or that the disciples stole the body. The latter was never countenanced by criticism; and the former had a very brief career. For it must at once have occurred to every one that the fact of Christ's death was certified by the surest authority. There was in the world then, and there is in the world now, nothing more punctiliously accurate than a soldier trained under the old Roman discipline. The guard at the Cross, although they see that Jesus is dead, yet make sure of it by a spear-thrust, a hand-breadth wide, sufficient of itself, as they well knew, to cause death. Pilate in the same spirit, when asked to deliver up the body, required from the

centurion on duty the necessary certificate that death had actually taken place. Besides, the supposition that Christ had not really died is useless: it does not serve the required purpose. It does not explain how the disciples were constrained to believe in a risen and glorified Lord. This belief could certainly not have been engendered by their seeing a pale, bleeding, crushed, defeated man who had death still to look forward to.

As Strauss says: 'One who had thus crept forth half dead from the grave, and crawled about, a sickly patient, needing medical and surgical assistance, nursing and strengthening, and who finally succumbed to His sufferings, could never have given His followers the impression that He was the Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life. Such a recovery could only have weakened, or at best given a pathetic tinge to the impression which He had made upon them by His life and death; it cannot possibly have changed their sorrow into ecstasy and raised their reverence into worship.'

Much easier, and, on the whole, more satis-

factory is it bluntly to deny that there was any empty grave. The body still lay there, and the empty grave was an invention of after times. This, however, leaves unexplained one important feature of the case. The apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin, and defended themselves on the ground that their Master was risen. The Sadducees were intensely interested in the case. Their central belief was at stake. What could be more obvious or easier than to produce the body and thus at once and for ever quash this pestilent heresy of a resurrection? Why did they not do so? The only reason Schmiedel can allege is that the body was too far gone in dissolution for identification. But not to mention that there was no other body in the new sepulchre, and that the production even of a skeleton would have been sufficient for their purpose, Schmiedel forgets that the body was embalmed and had certain marks upon it which for some months at any rate would serve for identification.

The empty grave is accounted for by the transformation of the natural into a spiritual

body by a process unknown; and it is accounted for by no other hypothesis as yet suggested. We must account not only for the appearances of the risen Lord, but for the empty grave, which either was not there at all, or was permanently there for any one to examine.

There remains, therefore, only that explanation of the disciples' belief in the Resurrection, which they themselves uniformly and unanimously gave, that they had seen Him alive after He had been dead and buried. It was no phantom, ghost, or imaginary appearance which could so personate their lost Master as to rouse them from the despondency and inaction and timidity of disappointed hopes to the calmest consistency of plan and the firmest courage. It was no vision created by their own excited imagination which could at once and for ever alter the idea of the Messiah which they, in common with all their countrymen, held. It was no phantom which could assume the impressive individuality of the Lord and continue His identity into new scenes and altered circumstances; who could inspire the disciples with unity of purpose and

lead them forward to the most splendid victories men have ever won. No! nothing will explain the faith of the apostles and of the rest, but the fact of their really seeing the Lord after His death clothed in power. The men who said they had seen Him were men of probity, they were men who proved themselves worthy of being witnesses to so great an event, men animated by no party spirit of vainglory, but by seriousness, even sublimity, of mind; men whose lives and conduct require an explanation and are at once explained by their having been brought into contact with the spiritual world in this surprising and solemnising manner.

A very few words may be added to indicate the *significance* of the Resurrection. *First*, It is its rationality, its coherence and consistency and essential relation to the whole work of Christ, that gives it credibility.

The Resurrection was itself essential to the work of Christ. Everything in the life of Jesus must be interpreted by His self-consciousness—His consciousness that He was the Christ. This is the key to the life and all that

is in it. The Christ was the representative not only of God but of man. He was the Revealer of man as well as the Revealer of God. He was called upon to pass through the whole curriculum of Man, and not until He had reached perfect manhood, manhood in its perfected condition, with body glorified as well as spirit, could He be accepted as perfect Christ. Possibly this is what Jesus meant when He enjoined upon the witnesses of the Transfiguration to say nothing about it until He should have risen from the dead. It was the Resurrection which authoritatively and powerfully proclaimed Him the Christ. Then only had He completed human experience and quite left behind Him all the dimming and trammelling conditions of earthly life.

Secondly, It was the Divine attestation to the truth of the claim of Jesus. In order that His claim to be the Messiah should be understood and that He might fulfil the function of the Messiah, it was necessary that He should die; but in order that His claim might be believed, it was necessary that He should rise. It was in this light the disciples first viewed it. They accepted

it as God's attestation to their Master's truth. It was the answer given by God to the doubts and calumnies and accusations of men. At the last He had stood alone, deserted by all. The rulers congratulated themselves that one more crazy delusion had been stamped out. And but for the Resurrection it would have been stamped out. But for this Divine reversal of human judgment the disciples themselves would not have known what to make of His death. The beauty and promise of His words, which had so attracted them, would now have seemed delusive and unbearable. But in the light of the Resurrection they saw that the Christ 'ought to have suffered these things and so to enter His glory.' It was only in the light of the Resurrection that the death of Christ became intelligible.

Thirdly, the Resurrection of Christ occupies a fundamental place in the Christian creed, because it discloses a real and close connection between this world and the unseen eternal world. There is no need now of argument to prove a life beyond: here is one who is in it. For the Resurrection of Christ was not a return to this life, to its wants, to its limita-

tions, to its dangers, to its inevitable close. It was a Resurrection to a life for ever beyond death. Neither was it a discarding of humanity on Christ's part, a cessation of His acceptance of human conditions, a rising to some kind of existence to which man has no access. On the contrary, it was because He continued truly human that He rose with human body and human soul, with all His human affections, ties, and sympathies, to a human life beyond the grave. If Jesus rose from the dead, then the world into which He is gone is a real world, in which men can live more fully than they can live here. As man He lived in this world showing us what every man ought to be; as man He lives in the unseen, revealing to us our destiny as men. As the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has it, He entered the heavenlies as our Forerunner, or as Peter has it 'By the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead we are begotten again unto a lively hope.'

MARCUS DODS.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT?

By the Rev.

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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT?

THE Scriptures speak frequently and plentifully of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Christ. The Scriptures carefully tell us what we ought to mean by this expression. They tell us that this Spirit is not a mere attribute or quality of God, that it is not a mere aspect or view of the Divine Nature, that it is what we may call a *Person* or *Relation within the Divine Three.* Jesus Himself uses the masculine personal pronoun in speaking of Him as *He* (ἐκεῖνος), 'When He the Spirit of Truth is come' (John xvi. 13); 'When He—the Comforter—is come, He will reprove the world' (Isa. xvi. 8). He says again, 'Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven' (Luke xii. 10). Paul assigns to Him the knowledge of things

divine: 'What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him; even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God' (1 Cor. ii. 11). In another place Paul attributes to Him choice, or will: 'All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will' (1 Cor. xii. 11). Toward us He exercises the functions of a Teacher, Reprover, Comforter. We are solemnly charged, on the other hand, not to sin against Him; but to be careful lest we *grieve* or *quench* Him (Ephes. iv. 30; 1 Thess. v. 19). Now, could any language prove to us more effectually than this does that He is a living, distinct, Divine Person—that He *knows*, that He *wills*, that He *comforts*, that He acts upon us, and bears relations to us; and that we act upon Him?

There was a time when the topic of the Trinity was worked out with a vigour and pertinacity which we can now hardly imagine. This was naturally in the early Christian centuries. But not the very earliest; for it was among Gentile and Greek Christians that the strife chiefly raged. These had not had the

advantage, which Jewish Christians had, of a preparation for the Doctrine of the Trinity in the teaching of the Old Testament. For a period of about fifty years (A.D. 325-381) the particular topic of the true Godhead and real personality of the Holy Spirit was debated with a keenness of which nothing in the present theological world at all reminds us. Basil the Great, who lived and wrote in the midst of the strife, compares the conflict to a naval battle carried on during a storm at sea.[1] Then, after a public confession in the Second General Council at Constantinople (381) (now a part of the Nicene Creed) that the Holy Spirit was 'the Lord and Giver of Life, that He proceeds from the Father and the Son, that with the Father and the Son He is to be equally worshipped and glorified, that He hath spoken to us by the Prophets,' *i.e.* is the Spirit of the Old Testament as well as of the New—this extraordinary contest unanimously ceased, and a complete and universal acceptance of the Godhead and Personality of the Holy Ghost filled the Christian Church. In addition to

[1] See paragraphs 76, 77 of Basil the Great *On the Holy Spirit.*

these two lines of proof—Holy Scripture and Church History—the experience of Christians is a third and abiding testimony to the reality of the Spirit. The Bible expressly distinguishes between the Spirit of God and the spirit of Christians. 'The Spirit itself,' says Paul, 'beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God' (Rom. viii. 16). When we pray, we know that prayer is taught us and sustained by a Spirit other than our own human spirit. We come in prayer *to* the Father, *through* Jesus, and through Jesus we pray *in* the Spirit. There is not an item of Christian truth which can be taught, there is not a movement of Christian feeling which can be sustained, but through that Divine Spirit who alone knows, and animates whatever in us is from God. So by this threefold evidence, of Scripture, of History, and of Experience, we are assured of the Holy Ghost and of His action in us.

Let us now go on to look at

The Work of the Holy Spirit, in and upon men, to their salvation. The work of Christ is followed by the work of the Spirit. The

work—apparently alone—of our Saviour in winning Redemption for us men, is followed by the operation of the Spirit in applying and bringing it home to us.

But, when we look more closely, we perceive that the work of the Saviour was not 'alone.' The agency of the Spirit is not now met with for the first time. We perceive that He also assists in the obtaining and accomplishment of the Redemption. He was that 'Spirit of the Lord' promised to Messiah in the Old Testament (Isa. lxi. 1-3) and actually resting upon Jesus in His earthly ministry. To Him New Testament Scripture expressly ascribes the formation of our Lord's humanity at the Incarnation (Luke i. 35). To His Descent at Jesus' Baptism, His consecration for His Messianic work is ascribed (Luke iii. 22). To His anointing, our Lord Himself traces His own call—His power to preach the Gospel (Luke iv. 14-18). The most arresting of His miracles—His casting out devils—Jesus Himself ascribes to 'the Spirit of God' (Matt. xii. 28). His whole career of beneficence St. Peter describes thus: 'God anointed Jesus of

Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil' (Acts x. 38). The crown of all His work, His self-offering on the Cross, is put in the same connection and traced to the same power, 'He through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God' (Heb. ix. 14). His Resurrection took place 'according to the Spirit of Holiness' (Rom. i. 4). Is it not significant of the *profound order and connection* of these Divine processes that this agency and aid of the Holy Spirit to our Lord Himself in winning Redemption for us, comes to view in the New Testament account of it, before there has been a word said about the action of the Holy Ghost in converting a sinner or in sanctifying a saint?

But what we have now mainly to deal with is the actual application of Christ's Redemption to us men, in which the operation of the Spirit is specially manifested and glorified, as the Father was in the Counsel of Redemption and the Son in its Mediation for us. Pentecost was the advent of the Holy Ghost. The present is His dispensation, and the end is not

yet. The experience of the Christian life confirms this. *Doctrinally* we may *know* that the Spirit is the agent of our salvation from the first. *Practically* it is the highest and most ripened fruit of personal salvation, to take up, as with the thrill of an immediate and personal recognition, the primitive confession, '*I believe in the Holy Ghost.*'

Look at some of the *New Testament Titles and Appellations* of the Spirit. Even the less frequent of these, such as 'Spirit of Grace,' 'of Truth,' 'of Liberty,' 'of Glory,' may be shown to have a direct bearing on the way or mode of human salvation. But fix on one or two that are prominent; the (1) almost constant designation *The Holy Spirit*,[1] besides its main reference to His supreme distinction from all other spirits, suggests that holiness which is the end and outcome of His work. It is the designation of the *Third* in the blessed Trinity.

(2) The more special title, *Spirit of Christ, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of His Son*, besides

[1] Πνεῦμα ἅγιον; τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα; τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον; (once) Πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης.

indicating His personal relation in the Godhead, which the early Church enshrined in her *filioque*, 'proceedeth from the Father *and from the Son*,' also reminds us that the Spirit acts upon and along with the God-man in the whole work of Redemption, and that in the department of it we are now considering (its application), He acts *for* Christ and *from* Christ. The title denotes His mission, His position as Vicar of Christ, His immediate relation to the Redeemer. 'As He represents the Person and supplies the place of Jesus Christ, so He works and effects whatever the Lord Christ has taken upon Himself to work and effect towards His disciples. Wherefore as the work of the Son was not the Son's own work, but (as He loves to say) the work of the Father who sent Him, and in whose name He performed it, so the work of the Spirit is not the Spirit's own work, but rather the work of the Son by whom He is sent and in whose name He doth accomplish it.'[1] As we proceed we shall find that this title, 'Spirit of Christ,' acquires another significance, viz. to indicate the mode or

[1] Owen's *Works*, Goold's edition, iii. 195.

manner in which he applies the Redemption. That is to say, He presents or exhibits *Christ to men.* He unites them to *Christ Himself.* He maintains their union and communion with their Lord.

(3) Most special is that title *Paraclete*,[1] Advocate, Comforter, Helper, Teacher. This title of *Paraclete* may be called His official name, His title of office, 'the other Comforter,' and is further expounded to us in Scripture by the twofold function which as Paraclete He exercises toward us, expressed by two appropriate and distinctive terms. The one is His function as *Pleader* or *Pursuer*, which is to convince or convict us concerning Christ. It is called His *Rebuke*, reproof or conviction, Ἔλεγχος: ἐλέγχειν is not simply to *prove* (John xvi. 7, 8, 9, 10), but includes the refutation of an opponent. The other is His function as *Comforter*, *Helper*, Teacher of Christ's disciples and friends, and is specifically called His

[1] Παράκλητος (John xiv. 16, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7; 1 John ii. 1), *Advocatus*, *Consolator* (according as the earlier or later Greek usage is followed), *advocatus*, in the Roman not in the English sense; nearer the Scottish *Counsel*, but approaching *Patronus*. See Hare's note, *Mission of the Comforter*, ii. p. 521.

Unction or *Anointing*, Χρῖσμα (1 John ii. 20, 27), though also described by the help of a variety of other figures such as *stablishing*, *sealing*, and 'giving the *earnest* of the Spirit' (2 Cor. i. 21, 22). We further find these two functions of *Convicting* and *Anointing* expounded in various passages as exercised respectively in two distinct spheres—the *Public* and the *Private*—a glance at these in detail covers the whole ground of the Spirit's operation in bringing home to men the redemption obtained for them by Christ.[1]

I. *On the Public Scale*

When viewed on this larger scale, the *Conviction* is directed against the world; the *Anointing* is poured forth upon the Church or company of believers; and this latter *precedes* or *occasions* the former. The first grand instance in which these two occurred was on

[1] We shall deal afterwards more particularly with all parts and processes of personal salvation. That these are *personal* and *private*, such as Regeneration, Conversion, Faith, and Repentance. That then, there follow the more *manifest* or *public* effects, such as Justification, Sanctification, Adoption, and Glory. But what we have to do now is to treat them altogether as really wrought by the *Grace* or *Efficacy* of the Spirit.

the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came with power upon the disciples, and through them testified of Christ to the unbelieving world around them. But this primal instance in which the Paraclete made, as it were, His triumphal entry into the Church, and the Dispensation of the Spirit may be said to have begun, was only the Type or Norm for the constant exercise of the power of the Spirit and has been followed by countless Revivals and Reformations ever since. Its manifestation is twofold, as has been said. Upon the Church or company of believers it is an *Unction or Anointing—a Baptism of Power*. Then, through the Church, it is a *Rebuke or reproof—a Conviction or Conviction of the world*.

1. The Function of the Comforter towards the Church, after Christ's departure, was to take the Saviour's place as representing Him and directing them. He was to remind them of what Christ had taught, 'bringing all things to their remembrance.' He was to expound to them what, in that teaching, they had not fully comprehended. He was to make even

fuller and more extensive communications of truth. 'He shall teach you all things.'[1] He was to render them perpetual support and superintendence in the proclamation of the Gospel. He was to increase them with wisdom and might inwardly. In short, He was to be with them and in them, an abiding *Power and Unction* maintaining among them the Spiritual Presence of their Lord and Head.[2]

2. On the other hand, this *Anointing* brings about a *Reproof* for the world. This public testimony of the Spirit, through His anointed witnesses and His word, carries home *conviction* or *confutation* to men, in respect of *sin*, of *righteousness*, and of *judgment*.[3] (1) He convinces them of *sin*, demonstrating by His Pentecostal Advent that the Christ whom men had crucified was the Son of God. Thus their sin had no cloak, the unbelief which had rejected Christ was unmasked, it was discovered as the motive and spring of all sin, and this instance of it, declared to be its climax or masterpiece—'because they believe not in Me.'

[1] John xiv. 26. [2] See the whole passage, John xiv., xv., xvi.
[3] See especially John xvi. 8-11.

(2) He convinced them of *righteousness*, *i.e.* of the personal righteousness of Jesus—the righteousness of God revealed and wrought in Him for human salvation. That *righteousness* is now sustained and sealed by His Resurrection, Ascension, and absence from the world, 'because I go to the Father and ye see me no more.' (3) He convinces them of *Judgment*, 'because the Prince of this world is judged.' That is to say, the open Testimony of the Spirit has now reversed the condemnation passed upon the Prince of Life by men. That condemnation has now passed over to the Prince of this world, who, by this supreme event, is now discovered and cast out from the rule which he formerly held among men. Judgment with unavoidable conviction is now passed upon all that superstition, idolatry, and wickedness with which he filled the world. The result of this rebuke, reproof, or conviction is two-sided. It is confutation, confusion, and defeat to the world as a whole. But it breaks down the rule of Satan by *disintegration*, by separating the world finally into the *saved* or the *judged*, the *acquitted* or the *condemned*, according as

convinced of sin they embrace the righteousness of Christ; or, convicted but not convinced, remain subject to that 'wrath which is appointed for the Devil and his angels.'

So much for the Function of the Paraclete on the Public Scale as developed in these passages of the Fourth Gospel.

II. *On the Private and Personal Scale*

Over against this there is a similar twofoldness in the Function of the Spirit toward those persons or individuals to whom He brings home the Redemption as an actual possession. Usually it takes place here, in the reverse order. He is *first* a Spirit of Conviction and Conversion in them, baptizing them unto Repentance, Remission, and Regeneration. Then, *second*, He is a Spirit of Holiness, anointing them unto Confirmation and Establishing in Christ. Of these briefly :—

1. In that whole process by which a man passes from the state of Sin into a state of Grace—the Holy Spirit is the Agent. He is exercising His function as a Paraclete in the first sense. He is dealing with one whom

He finds in the world and of the world. He deals with such an one, as an *advocate*, by His reproof bringing home conviction. This He does usually by a secret efficacy, in a private manner, working in the hidden man of the heart. The Spirit's own personality is not obtruded on the subject of these operations. The subject is usually quite unaware at the time that he is under the hand of this Divine Agent—may have, indeed, not so much as heard, that there 'is any Holy Ghost.' The Spirit is bringing that soul to Christ, and it is of Christ alone He witnesses. So, let any of us who may be permitted to be fellow-workers in such cases, beware how we speak. We do not certainly know, at such a stage, that it is the Spirit's work. We may not drag aside the veil from that sacred and secret operation.

2. Then the Comforter comes to His further Function of *confirming* or *stablishing* the regenerated and converted soul.[1] This second step—which is what the Scripture calls 'the gift of the Holy Ghost,' 'receiving the Holy

[1] 2 Cor. i. 21, 22; Ephes. i. 14, iv. 30.

Ghost,' and the like expressions—has been too little signalised in its distinctness and advance upon the former. That this operation of the Spirit is subsequent to His converting work, and distinct from it, we need not wait to prove. It may synchronise with it, but hardly and not often. The case of Cornelius and his household, who received it immediately after conversion (Acts x. end); of the men at Ephesus who received it, not for some time after (Acts xix. 1-12), the expression of it, as a 'stablishing in Christ' (2 Cor. i. 21), as a 'sealing after men have believed' (Eph. i. 14). These are sufficient to clear the fact that it is usually *distinct from* and *subsequent to* converting grace. The *name* for this effect as experienced by Christians varies. *Confirmation* is a scriptural idea and term. But 'Confirmation' has come to be associated with an ecclesiastical custom which is neither Scriptural nor Catholic. '*Consecration*' or entire devotedness to Christ for life and service, designates it by one of its most marked effects. But the Scriptural terms and figures for it are *Anointing*, *Sealing*, re-

ceiving the *Earnest*, and to these we must adhere.

As contrasted with the first or initial work *of* the Spirit there is here also a *change of method.* Whereas *that* was secret, this is open and patent. It is the manifestation of a child of God. It is the witness of the Spirit with his own spirit, as to his Sonship. It is his receiving the robe, the ring, the credentials of his new standing. The subject of it has now a joyous consciousness of the Spirit's work within Him. So it is appropriately compared in Scripture to *Fire*, *Oil*, a *Seal*, a *Pledge*, or an *Earnest.*

And there is also a *change of effect.* The effect of Initial or Regenerating grace is to *unite* the soul to Christ. The effect of Sealing or Confirming grace is to maintain the *Communion of the Soul* with Christ and bring it into fulness. It is the suggestive remark of Calvin that until our mind is stirred up to receive the Holy Spirit, Christ Himself is in a manner unused, unshared, even by a Christian, because He is viewed coldly apart, and, as it were, at a distance (*Instit.*, III. i. 3).

Indeed, some would confine this expression about 'receiving the Holy Ghost' entirely to this *further* or *second* movement, ignoring that initial, subconscious, and secret effect of *conviction*. But it is wiser to include both movements in that action of the Spirit upon our persons, because to Him, the Spirit who is 'Lord and Giver of Life,' must be attributed the whole operation which issues in our salvation from first to last. It is of moment to observe that all the Scripture figures on this gift of the Holy Ghost imply that it is the result of *Union to Christ*, that it is necessarily shared by the Head, and by the members of the Spiritual body alike. The *Unction* flows down from the Head to them all. The *Seal* with which God the Father sealed *Him, seals them.* The *Earnest* or *Pledge* is the Indwelling or Inhabitation of the same Spirit, both in Christ and in His people.

Indeed, this is the *Crown* and *Essence* of the Spirit's work in applying the Redemption of Christ to men. The *previous* or *initial* grace may be held to be external to the man himself compared with this. The awakening

of the dead conscience, the kindling of the spark of faith, the putting of the man right with God, once for all, by pardon and acceptance, the New Birth and Baptism of repentance —these are all works done, as it were, *upon* the man, he himself being rather the passive recipient of them all. But *now* when the Spirit of Christ *seals* him, *anoints* him, *dwells* in him, *works* through him, it is Christ that liveth in this man. He is led by the Spirit, walks in the Spirit, prays in the Spirit, brings forth all the fruits of the Spirit, and thus not only is witnessed to, but, in his turn, witnesses for, Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus is the circle completed. The inwardness of a strong progressive life—when Christ's members have received the Spirit—shows itself by consistent, first-hand testimony for Christ to the world; and so the Lord's purpose in sending His Spirit is fulfilled.

Without the Holy Ghost we have practically no Christ. With His infinite resources, with all His love and glory Christ is only brought nigh to the Christian and made a part of his being by the gift of the In-

dwelling Spirit. This is the centre-point of evangelical faith. The heart of personal piety is left out, if we make the Holy Spirit to mean only the *esprit de corps* of Christendom; or, if we make the Spirit no distinct Divine Personality, but only a metaphorical name for the Indwelling Christ. It is by His Person and Agency that the Christ indwells. 'The Baptism of the Spirit is the quintessence of our Holy Religion.'[1]

And all this is countersigned by Christian experience—and that, too, on the highest and widest scale—the experience of all the Christian Church. In all branches of it, the Head has vindicated the honour due to His Holy Spirit —'I believe in the Holy Ghost' has been inscribed on the Creeds of Christendom. Yet the Eastern Church, more than eleven centuries ago, committed herself to the denial of His connection with the Son—a small point, a theological nicety, some would say—but look at the result. In all these centuries that Church has remained an 'orthodox fossil,'[2]

[1] Fletcher of Madeley.

[2] Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Cunningham Lecture), p. 291.

unvisited and unblessed by the Revivals and Reformations of the Spirit. The Romish Church has *filioque* in her Creed, it is true, but in doctrine and practice alike has painfully denied the Spirit, and the result is declension and corruption. Even the Churches of the Reformation have not been all equally faithful. Some of them, through their unfortunate Sacramentarianism and Churchliness, leave little room in their teaching for the grace of the Spirit. It is in the Reformed Churches, and especially in those of the Puritan type, that the doctrine of the Spirit has been cherished and most fully illustrated in literature. Does any one need to be reminded of the practical result, that these Churches have been mainly honoured to extend the Gospel throughout the world, and to manifest the experimental fruits of Christian life and work?

JOHN LAIDLAW.

WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

By the Rev.

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WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

In the oldest Irish Crosses, which we in this country familiarly call Iona Crosses, there is a beautiful bit of symbolism which has quite disappeared in modern imitations. The uppermost part of the cross, the portion standing above the circle, took the form of a church or house; and the truth symbolised was that the Church, or the communion of the saints, rested upon the forgiveness of sins which was symbolised by the Cross. The Church was that community which had come into existence through the forgiveness of sins, won for His people by our Lord's death on the Cross.

This Communion of the Saints which is called the Church is spoken about very often in the New Testament and more frequently in the writings of the Apostle Paul; and when we try to understand what he means by the word, we find that there are these things about it.

It is a *Unity*—there is ONE Church of Christ. The more carefully we examine the descriptions given by the Apostle the clearer we see that this unity is something essentially spiritual. This does not mean that it is a mere sentiment. Spiritual things are as real as material. But it does mean that the One Church of Christ can never be described in a merely historical way. It is true that we can trace the beginnings of Christian Societies and see how they spread out and united with each other. But apart from all such surface facts there is something deeper in the thought of the unity of the Christian Church—something which lies in the unformed faith of every Christian—that in his union with Christ there is also a union with the whole body of the redeemed. And because the unity of the Christian Church is in the first resort a primary verity of the Christian faith, it can never be adequately represented in an outward polity but must always be, at its deepest, a Christian experience; and its centre and source can never be any earthly throne, but must always be in the Heavenly place where Jesus sits at the right hand of God.

Again we are taught in Scripture that this Church of Christ is something *visible*. Even the Church Universal is a visible community. For the ideal church is not invisible because it is an ideal reality. It can be seen in any Christian community great or small—seen in a measure by the eyes of sense and more truly by the eye of faith. All things earthly have this double element in them; they are what they are to be. We must look at the purpose which lies in anything if we are to know what it really is. So is it with what belongs to the kingdom of God. We *are* the 'sons of God,' and yet we '*wait* for the adoption'; we *are* redeemed, and yet our 'redemption draweth nigh'; those who are saved are told to work out their own salvation. So it is with the Christian Society. It is what it is to be. We are definitely taught by the very ways in which St. Paul uses the word Church to see the Universal Christian Church of Christ in the smallest Christian congregation.

This Visible Church of Christ possesses a special *authority*, given to it by Christ Himself. We can see what sort of thing this

authority was in the accounts given us of the actions of the earliest Christian communities recorded for us in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of St. Paul. It was a democratic rule. Even in the Primitive Church in Jerusalem, where the presence of an Apostle was seldom lacking, it was the assembly of the congregation which selected office-bearers and appointed delegates. It exercised what we call discipline, and in the course of this exercise it summoned even Apostles before it and passed judgment upon their conduct. And when we pass to the Church founded by the Apostle Paul, the proofs of this democratic government are still more abundant. But this democratic rule was also theocratic. The Lord Himself was present with the assembly that ruled. His presence was manifested in the 'gifts' which He had bestowed upon them and which were not the less divine because they manifested themselves in the natural endowments and common sense of the members of the community. The presence of Christ may be as easily manifested in a decision arrived at by a majority of votes as in the fiat launched from

an episcopal chair. The latter is not necessarily from 'above,' and the former is not necessarily from 'beneath.'

This Church of Christ is also a *sacerdotal* society in which all its members have the right of approaching God at all times and in every place. They may appoint, under rules fixed by the community, men to lead their devotions and in order that all things may be conducted with a decent solemnity. But there are no human mediators. There is one mediator only, and all, men, women, and children, have the promise of immediate entrance into God's Presence; they are all priests, and their services are all sacrifices.

But while we find all these thoughts attached by St. Paul to this word Church, and while all are needed to express its meaning, there is one idea which stands out pre-eminently — the thought of FELLOWSHIP. The Church of Christ is a fellowship both divine and human. It is a fellowship with Jesus; that is the divine side. It is a fellowship with all our fellow-men who stand in the same relation to our Lord; that is the human side. This fellowship with Jesus

and with the brethren is the secret of the Church—what explains it and makes us see what it really is. And naturally it is this aspect of the Church which has attracted men when they have tried to picture to themselves what the Church is and how it is to be portrayed. A very little thought is needed to see that all those ideas of unity, authority, and sacerdotal character, will be coloured by the meaning given to the thought of fellowship.

It is somewhat easy to construct a theory of the Church which will be more or less true to all that is said about the Fellowship on its divine side, provided only no heed be paid to the fact that it does take a visible form. Nor is it very difficult to think of a great visible and historical organisation which in some external aspects does present the appearance of a great Christian Fellowship, provided only that the hidden union with Christ, so insisted upon in the New Testament, be almost entirely overlooked or explained in merely external and material ways. The real difficulty emerges when both the divine and the human sides of the Fellowship on which Scripture insists are

resolutely and persistently kept in view. It is always difficult to explain the unseen by the seen, the eternal by the temporal, and the divine by the human; and the task is the greater when the union of these two elements in the Church of Christ is the theme of discussion.

It is therefore, perhaps, not wonderful that we do not get an adequate doctrine of the One Visible Catholic Church of Christ until we come to the theology of the Reformation.

Instead of this we have two quite different conceptions of what the Church of Christ is, each held and taught, sometimes by the same thinkers, without much attempt to combine them in one complete whole.

On the one side, the Church was thought of as the fellowship of God with man depending on the purpose of God and independent of all visible outward organisation; on the other hand it was a great historical society which existed in the world and was held together by its own visible political ties. You can see both conceptions in Augustine, and you can also see how even his great dialectical skill

failed to combine the two into one harmonious whole.

These two separate, almost mutually exclusive, ideas of what the Church was were taken over into the mediæval Church and lived in it side by side in the same unconnected fashion. The former was the religious thought. The latter was built up by the juristic dialectic of the schoolmen, working on a series of supposed historical testimonies for the most part forged, into the conception that the Church was a visible hierarchical State, having a strictly monarchical constitution—its king being the Bishop of Rome, who was said to be the representative of Christ, the King and Head of the Church.

The former was the ground on which all the most conspicuous mediæval piety rested. The spiritual Church, with its unseen but real fellowship with Christ, was the garden in which bloomed all the flowers of mediæval mystical devotion. The latter was the active force in all ecclesiastical struggles with princes and peoples, with reformers and so-called heretics. It was a purely political conception, reduced the Church to the level of a State, and con-

tained little to stimulate to piety or to holy living. The labours of the great schoolmen of the thirteenth century did attempt to impregnate this conception of an hierarchical state, which represented to them the sphere of the fellowship which Christians ought to have with each other, with the profounder thought of a possible fellowship of Christians singly and unitedly with Christ Himself. They did this by their theories of a magical sacramental system which was thoroughly bound up with and limited by the hierarchical principle in the hierarchical State.

Still it can be said that all throughout the Middle Ages down to the sixteenth century these two different and almost antagonistic conceptions existed side by side, and that mediæval piety, whether inside or outside of what was called the mediæval Church, found its home in the one, and regarded the other with the toleration of indifference, and that neither in the one conception nor in the other did the living personal faith of the believing Christian find any conspicuous place.

Before dismissing the subject it may be well

to note that ever since the Council of Trent the dream of a spiritual Church, which had fed mediæval piety for centuries, has been wholly dismissed, and that the hierarchical conception of the Church has been alone maintained. Our Anglican friends, in spite of pathetic appeals to an antiquity which never existed, have in this and in other matters simply taken over modern Romanist ideas.

The spiritual intuition which had come to Luther made him see that any conception of the Church which left out of view the living Word of God coming down to man, and man's faith rising to God, must for that very reason be misleading and erroneous. The Church was undoubtedly created by God. Something sure and stable had been divinely communicated to it in virtue of which it had come into existence. But this something was not a mysterious priesthood, a sort of *Plastic Medium* between God and man, still less was it the mass of dreary statutes of Canon Law which set forth the constitution of the mediæval Church under the monarchy of the Pope. The Church was a fellowship—a uniting of Jesus and His people,

and of His people with each other through their union with Him—and the basis and creative cause of this fellowship was the Word of God, the Revelation of God in Christ, and the faith of man which the manifestation of the Word brought forth. The Word of God and the faith of man made the very being of the Church; all other things—ministry, sacraments, discipline, etc.—concerned its well-being and were of secondary though of real importance. Luther rings the changes on this thought of the Word of God, which is the basis of the Church, and he varies the names he has for it. It is the Gospel according to the pure understanding; the promises of God; the testimony of Jesus, who is the Saviour of souls; 'The consolations offered in Christ.' 'It is the spiritual gate,' says Calvin, 'whereby we enter into God's heavenly kingdom'; it is 'the mirror in which faith beholds God.' It is, according to the Westminster Confession, 'the sum of God's commands, threatenings, promises, and above all His Gospel of Jesus Christ—all of which things are to be apprehended by our faith.' This is the something sure and stable

which has been divinely communicated by God and in virtue of which the Church has come into existence.

The Church is therefore in some sense invisible. Its secret is its hidden fellowship with Jesus. Its roots penetrate into the divine and the unseen, and draw from thence its nourishment needed to sustain its life. But it is a visible thing, and can be seen wherever the Word of God is faithfully proclaimed, and wherever faith manifests itself in testimony and in bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit. This is the old apostolic way of thinking and acting. When the community in Jerusalem heard of the proclamation of the gospel at Antioch and the gathering of a congregation of disciples there, they sent Barnabas down to inquire about the matter. When he appeared and made his inquiries, what he saw was the manifestation of the Grace of God; the proclamation of the Word, the answering faith in the hearers; the testimony to the new life in the bringing forth of the fruits of the Spirit. Whether we take the reception of Cornelius, the welcome accorded to the

Samaritan converts, or the action of Barnabas at Antioch, the visible unity of the Church of Christ was made visible to the eyes of sense, not by uniformity of organisation, or by any marks of external succession, but by the facts that the Word, *i.e.* the Revelation of God in Christ, was honestly proclaimed, and that faith manifested itself in bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit of Christ.

If you turn to any collection of creeds of the Churches of the Reformation times, whether evangelical or reformed, you will find this common doctrine of the Visible Catholic Church of Christ. Some vary in their mode of expressing the thought; some do not sufficiently distinguish, in words at least, between what the Church is and what it has, between what makes its being and what is to be included in its well-being. But in all we have the two fundamental thoughts that the Church is made visible by the proclamation of the Word and by the manifestation of Faith.

How spiritual, how simple, how rich, how practical is this Reformation conception of

the Visible Catholic Church of Christ! and, therefore, how akin to the word and spirit of New Testament teaching!

It is spiritual. The Church is defined by that element in it which separates it from all other forms of human association—its special relation to the divine—and it is shown to be visible at the place where that divine element can and does manifest itself. All merely material external marks are rejected in describing the essential nature of the Church. In this the reformed conception follows the example of St. Paul. He was confronted as we are by men, believers in the salvation accomplished by Jesus and accepting Him with all earnestness as their Saviour, who insisted that there must be some principle of external historical succession marking off the Church of Christ and uniting it with the past. They found this in the practice of circumcision, and they asserted in modes familiar enough to us that no one who was outside the circle of the 'circumcised,' no matter how strong his faith, nor how the fruits of the Spirit were manifest in his life and

deeds could plead the security of the divine covenant. St. Paul bent his whole energies to break down this false principle of continuity, which placed the succession in something external and not in the possession and transmission from generation to generation of those gifts of the Spirit which were the manifestation of a faith created by the proclamation of the Word. When any principle of material succession is once admitted, what puerilities gather round our conception of what the Church must be. The cathedrals of the Middle Ages were cold places in winter, and the clergy of these days very sensibly wore their mediæval great-coats (Cappa) over their clerical dress when they officiated there. Our modern ritualists must, therefore, wear 'copes' when they officiate in these high churches, although modern science has provided other means of heating the great buildings. To abandon the dress would be to destroy a sign of the visible continuity of the Church. Roman tailors of the time of Heliogabalus designed a fashionable dress on a model suggested by the national costume

of the Dalmatian peasantry; in the course of events, which can be traced historically, the robe so introduced became a part of the special dress of the Roman clergy in the fifth century. Now the ritualist must clothe his deacon and partially robe his bishop in a garment of the shape which the peasant women of Clissa, and other remote Dalmatian villages, wear to this day when they come to market to sell their figs and chickens. To wear such a robe is actually declared to be a sign of the Visible Catholic Church of Christ. 'Instead of the Church,' says Calvin, 'the Papists produce certain external forms, which are often at a great distance from the Church, and are not necessary to its existence.'[1]

It is simple. It seizes the essential, and holds fast by that; and in doing so it likewise provides room for all other things which belong to the well-being of the Church; only it relegates them to their proper subordinate position. The proclamation of the Word and the manifestation of faith mark the visible presence of the Church of Christ, and every-

[1] *Inst.*, IV. ii. 3.

thing belonging to that proclamation, and all that will aid the establishment, growth, and manifestation of faith must be taken into account, and are taken into account. There must be a *ministerium* of some sort in word and sacrament instituted within the Church of Christ, in order to lead the individual to faith and to aid him in its growth and outcome. Such a ministry has its field simply in the administration of the means of grace, and is a matter of administration. Bodies of believers may differ about the precise form which this ministry ought to take, but such differences while they may lead to separate administrations do not imply separation from the One Catholic Church of Christ to which they all belong; for, however outwardly different, they all circle round the essential things—the proclamation of the Word and the manifestation of the Faith. Such differences were recognised within the Church Catholic and Visible from the earliest times. They did not prevent Tertullian seeing —in the third century—that the 'churches, although so many and so great, comprise but one primitive Church'; and they need not prevent

us in the twentieth century from declaring that there is a Visible Catholic Church of Christ, consisting of all those throughout the world who visibly worship the same Father, profess their faith in the same Saviour, and are taught by the same Holy Spirit, though the catholicity does not find expression in uniformity of organisation of worship, or of formulated creed.

It is rich and full and all-embracing—catholic in the real sense of that word. It gives expression as no other theory does to the intuition which lies in the unformed faith of every believer; that in his personal union with Christ there is a union with the whole body of the redeemed, and that the believer's union with Christ, which is the deepest of all personal things, always involves something social; that the call comes to him singly, but not solitarily. Wherever there is the proclamation of the Word and the awakening to and manifestation of faith, there is the Visible Catholic Church of Christ, even if errors intermingle and superstitions encrust. That was the Reformation thought. Calvin but expresses the sentiment of every Reforma-

tion theologian when he says that wherever there is the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments there is the Visible Church of Christ, and that no society is to be refused the name of Church where these are, although it may be chargeable with many faults.

It is inspiring. When you present your children for baptism, you not merely enrol them in the congregation to which you belong; nor merely in this United Free Church of ours; nor even in the wide circle of the Reformed Church which goes round the world. You enrol them through the door of this congregation in the Visible Catholic Church of Christ. When you, in our Scotch language, join the Church, and for the first time sit down at the Lord's Table, you do more than become a member of this congregation—you enter on the membership of the Universal Church of Christ. You become one of that mighty multitude which no man can number of every nation and of every language. That is the great and inspiring thought. All the various particular Churches say our Confes-

sion, are members of the great Catholic Church of Christ, which, parts of it in fashions strange to us, is nevertheless worshipping the same God, is redeemed by the same Saviour, and is taught by the same Spirit—a wide-spreading Visible Fellowship, if we have only the faith and the love needed to see it.

And, lastly, it is practical. Let me quote from Luther: 'Any one who is to find Christ must first find the Church. For how can one know where Christ is, and where faith in Him is, unless he knew where His believers are? Whoever wishes to know something about Christ must not trust to himself, nor by the help of his own reason build a bridge of his own to heaven, but must go to the Church, must visit it, and make inquiry. Now the Church is not wood and stone, but the company of people who believe in Christ; He must keep in company with them, and see how they believe, and teach, and live.' For the thought of this Visible Catholic Church embracing all denominations of Christians among whom the Word is preached and Faith is made manifest, does not weaken but ought to strengthen the

affection we have for that portion of it to which we belong and in which we are set. It is by being faithful in the smaller things that we are faithful in the greater. It is by loyalty to that part of the Church in which we are set that we are loyal to the great Church of God. We are placed by God within our own sphere, and by working there for the advancement of His Kingdom we can best bring it in. Only this attachment, this loyalty, and this service must all contain within them the faith and vision of that wider sphere, that all-embracing Catholic Church Visible, which contains the denomination to which we belong, and which exists and is seen wherever the Word is preached, and faith is manifest, and the fruits of the Spirit ripen in all manner of devout life and conduct.

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CAN SIN BE FORGIVEN?

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CAN SIN BE FORGIVEN?

It may well seem a strange thing to raise in the Christian Church the question whether sin can be forgiven. The commission on which the Church has acted from the beginning is that repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations in Jesus' name. The forgiveness of sins has a place in all the creeds. It is not only an article of faith, it is a fact of experience. The consciousness of the Church is the consciousness of sins forgiven. As Luther put it, the Church is full of the forgiveness of sins; it is a community of forgiven men. Yet the very fact that forgiveness has a place in the Creed shows that it is a great and in some respects an unfathomable thing. There is nothing commonplace in the Creed, nothing that you can believe without an effort, or hold without conflict. There is nothing in it which is natural and to be taken for granted; everything in it is supernatural—

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—the first advent of the Saviour and the last—the Church with its divine life and its common participation in holy things—the forgiveness of sins and the life everlasting. There is not a point at which faith is easy, and has nothing to challenge it; on the contrary, at every point, from beginning to end, we have to fight the good fight if these transcendent supernatural realities are to maintain their place in our life as real.

I have said that the forgiveness of sins is a fact of experience, and in that sense unquestionable. Perhaps we see it most distinctly in the Old Testament, because a vaster range of time is covered there, and there are more experiences and less of systematic reflection. We cannot help feeling that alike in the historical and the devotional books of the Old Testament forgiveness is in some sense taken for granted. Not that it is ever regarded as a trifle, which one may take for granted as a matter of course; the very reverse is the case. The wonder of it recurs perpetually: it is the inspiration of the profoundest adoration, the

most deeply felt praise; it is in the sense of it that men own the incomparableness of the God who wins and holds their hearts. 'Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.' But wonderful as it is, there is never any indication that the conception of it presented difficulty in Israel. It never occurred to any one that the idea of pardon was self-contradictory, or impossible, or immoral. And the reason of that, I have little doubt, is that these men of old believed with a simple intensity in the personality of God, and in the personal character of all relations to him. They were not deluded by abstract ideas, not even by such sublime abstractions as those of the unity of nature or the inviolableness of natural law, by which the minds of modern men are at once supported and paralysed. When they sinned, they knew that they sinned against God; they knew that His anger was kindled, and that He hid His face from them. But that was not all that they knew. They

knew that many a time He turned His anger away, and stirred not up all His wrath. They knew that He made His face to shine upon them. They knew that all life changed under that brightness as the earth changes under the sun of spring. That was what they called forgiveness. It was a real experience, and never merely a negative one. It did not mean a mere cancelling of the past. It meant the coming of God again into a life from which He had been shut out. It meant a change in His relation to a sinful people—a change which always brought with it regenerative power.

Now forgiveness presents difficulties—intellectual difficulties, I mean, or what those who are oppressed by them would call scientific difficulties—to those who do not think in this personal fashion of the relations of God and man, but dwell mentally in a world of abstract ideas and natural laws. In such a world sin is an action, an action which has initiated certain movements in the vast mechanism of nature; and these movements must work themselves out to their inevitable issues. To speak

of forgiveness in this connection is to speak of something which is shown to be unreal by the very fact that you cannot bring it into contact with reality. It is as futile as sympathy with a sick man which can do nothing for his health, or sympathy with a poor man which can do nothing for his relief. Men may have very different impressions of the seriousness of sin when they contemplate it from this point of view; but they cannot contemplate its being forgiven. Sometimes, perhaps, it may seem not much to matter. There are sins of a sort which are easily tolerated or condoned. They are not obviously fatal to anything; they constitute a deformity or a disproportion in the life rather than a deadly flaw which takes the heart out of it; it is not, it may be argued, of so much consequence whether they are forgiven or not—supposing they could be. We hope, perhaps, to outgrow them. There are other sins, however, which are far more serious, even from this point of view. Men see that they have been involved by them in consequences which go far beyond themselves and their control. They are deeply conscious

of what, from their own point of view, is irreparable and tragic in their sin. The best they can do is to brace themselves to a kind of stoical courage, and bear what they have brought upon themselves, or perhaps—which may be far harder—what they have brought upon others. They steel themselves to do it silently, completely, with the resolution of despair—often, no doubt, with a kind of heroism, the only heroism that is possible to those who interpret life in this way. Yet surely we are justified in feeling that in such an attitude to sin there is something amazingly unequal to the experiences which human souls have actually had in this connection. It is not only that there is no experience of forgiveness—that is only part of the case; it is equally true that there is no experience of repentance, of humility, of yearning after God; of regeneration, gratitude, devotion.

The truth is, that at this level we are not dealing with sin at all, and therefore none of the experiences which Scripture shows us as connected with it in human souls come within our reach. Sin can only be defined

in one way — namely, by relation to God; and till the relation to God comes into view it is impossible for us to understand either the realities or the possibilities which it involves. What is it that is violated by sin? Is it our own nature? Is it an abstract law which is embodied in the world? No; it is the will of the living God, that will in which alone we have eternal life. When we sin, we literally sin *against* something. There is something which resists us and which we have to overcome and push out of our way. I have never been able to make anything experimentally out of the metaphysical definitions of sin which pronounce it to be merely negative, the defect of good, or absence of true being; and just as little out of those which claim to be scientific, and regard it as simply the survival of something natural which should have expired. When we sin, we put our being into it, and our will. We spend *force* pushing something aside which resists us as we push. And that resisting something is not the mere conception of our duty, nor an abstract law, nor the constitution of things; it is the will

of the Living God. There is a curious kind of atheism in which many men are entangled here. Their sin is their own, they feel, and they are resolved to deal with it themselves. The responsibility is their own, and they will take it on their own shoulders. But to speak thus is to shut our eyes to the facts of the case. Our responsibility *is* our own, but it is a responsibility *to God*. It is this which makes it what it is, and it is only when we set it in this light that we can ask or answer any questions about it, that we can appreciate either its dimensions or its perils or its hopes.

Here, then, is the point to which we must bring our difficulties; here, in particular, is the light in which we must raise the question, Can sin be forgiven? Let us state the case as black and as desperate as we may, and we will not be able to state it more black and desperate than the reality has been. It is possible for a man to sin so deeply and so persistently that all hope is apparently taken away. His being may be involved in badness to the last fibre; every nerve in his body, every tissue of his brain, the very springs of

thought and imagination may be tainted and defiled; the evil that is in him may have gone out from him and be working far beyond his control in souls he never dreamt of—think, for example, of the ruin wrought by one bad book of genius, which is a kind of deathless sin, a fountain casting up its poisonous waters from generation to generation; or even by one foul jest, which its wit has kept alive, and which has slain the innocence of thousands: think of a case like this, and can you speak of forgiveness in connection with it? Can you preach forgiveness to a soul which has so sinned? Once we ask this question at the proper place, we see on what the answer depends. It depends on which of these two is greater—the Living God, in whom all that world of nature, in which sin reigns in death, nevertheless lives and moves and has its being; or the corruption, degradation, and despair that have been introduced into that world of nature by the sin of man. Of course if there is no Living God forgiveness is impossible; forgiveness is impossible on the level of nature, as impossible as sin itself. But granting that the living God

and the living soul are both present, the answer is not doubtful. There *is* forgiveness *with God.* He is able to save to the uttermost. Man cannot introduce into nature any force which passes beyond His control. He can put right with Himself again the soul which has become most desperately wrong. He can cause healing waters to flow over the most desert places. The sin that has struck its roots deepest into nature He can unroot. He can make the flesh of the leper come again like the flesh of a little child. This is what forgiveness means, and there is forgiveness *with Him.* In the fullest sense which we can attach to the word, it is supernatural. The man who does not know that it is a miracle does not know anything about it. It is not in nature to produce it or to impart it; it is the work of the God on whom all nature depends, and whom everything in nature serves. But it is a work which this transcendent, living, personal God actually achieves; it has been wrought by Him for sinners, it has been wrought in them and upon them, from generation to generation; it is wrought to this

day, and inspires all that is most deeply felt in worship. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.' 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than watchmen wait for the morning; yea, more than watchmen wait for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption, and He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.' It is not any illusion, it is the most real of all human experiences, which speaks out in this grateful adoration, and this passionate hope.

Forgiveness is best understood by examples, and the supreme example of it in Scripture is the prodigal son. The prodigal son had sinned wantonly, recklessly, ruinously. How easy it would have been from the level of nature and its inviolable laws to preach to him the im-

possibility of forgiveness. Let him repent as sincerely and as bitterly as he might, what difference would that make to his dissipated fortune, his shattered health, his lost innocence, his forfeited hopes? None in the world. This is the style in which the wisdom taught by nature speaks; it is the style also which is sometimes assumed by austere men, who seem to imagine that in indulging it they are acting as the guardians of morality and righteousness; it is the style of the elder brother, and of all the just persons who need no repentance, and who cannot conceive that forgiveness is a subject in which they should ever have an interest of their own. But it is not the style of Jesus. Jesus remembers, what all these people forget, that the prodigal son has a father. He remembers that the thought of the father can come into the prodigal's life as a new motive of immeasurable power. He remembers that when a son, even a prodigal son, acts on the motive thus supplied, there cannot but be a response from the other side. 'He arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet a great way off, his father saw

him, and was moved with compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him.' That love of the father was pardoning love, and it is a picture of the love of God. Who will say that in any region of life it is an impotent and ineffective thing? It is the most potent thing we know in the spiritual world. There is something healing and restorative in it that searches into the inmost recesses of the sinful nature—into the most sensitive places and the most benumbed, those that throb with pain and those that are past feeling—and that has virtue in it to make all things new. It is not for the elder brother, nor for the ninety and nine just persons who can think of repentance and forgiveness in an entirely disinterested manner; no, nor is it even for the students of natural law in the spiritual world, who know that things are what they are, and that the consequences of them will be what they will be, to bring their measuring lines in their hand, and prescribe beforehand to love—the last reality we know in the spiritual world—what it shall or shall not do in the way of restoring the soul.

It is painfully true, of course, that there are things which do not pass—consequences of sin, and especially of the habit of sin, which no one is allowed to forget or to escape. But it is no part of the belief in forgiveness, nor of the experience of it, to deny this. The man whose sin is forgiven realises more completely than any man all that sin is. *He* is initiated into the whole truth about it, the folly of it, the ingratitude, the despair; above all, the inexorableness with which God reacts against it. It is not the man who is forgiven who shirks the reality of sin. To take it for all that it is, and with all that it involves, is the condition of being forgiven, or rather it is part of the experience of forgiveness. 'They shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers in their trespass which they trespassed against Me, and also that because they have walked contrary unto Me, I also walked contrary unto them . . . if then their uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they then *accept of the punishment of their iniquity*, then will I remember My covenant.' To accept of the punishment of our iniquity is part of

the experience of reconciliation; but it is not to be interpreted as if it meant submitting to the inevitable, recognising that for good and all the results of sin were irreversible, and that now we had nothing to do but to reconcile ourselves, as best we might, to be what we had made ourselves, and to live out our life resignedly at the level to which sin had brought it. This is to forget the Father and His love and its healing power; it is to forget that even the punishment of our iniquity, in a world ruled by the love of the Father, is not damnation but discipline; and that its end is not the despair but the deliverance of the soul. There *are* consequences of sin both bodily and spiritual, effects of it on the physique, the imagination, the emotions, the capacity for particular kinds of service, that do not disappear with reconciliation; but I dare to say that the more the man to whom the forgiving love of the Father has come realises this, the more deeply and humbly he recognises in it the punishment which sin has merited, and which in a world ruled by God is the sinner's *due*, the more completely,

at the same time, does he become right with God, and get power, in time, and when it is safe for him, to transcend even these limitations. In seeing and accepting the truth about sin, his being is opened unreservedly to the holiness and love of God, and it is profane to set limits to their restorative power. With all his disabilities pressing on him, with his future, apparently, mortgaged to his past, the sinner may be as sure of the love of God as the prodigal of his father's love, when he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And in that love, which is divine love—that is, love transcending nature and its laws and using them—he has the assurance that these disabilities are not eternal, and that meanwhile they are for his good.

Forgiveness, then, is possible, if we have a heavenly Father, and if sin is sin against Him. The possibility of it can be questioned only by those who do not believe in a living God, with whom men have personal relations; or whose God is not the Father of Spirits, but only the unity of all the laws of nature. It is possible, if we think of God as the New

Testament teaches us to think of Him, or as He is represented to us in the Creed. It is possible, but is it easy? This is not the teaching of the New Testament or of the Creed. As I have said already, everything in the Creed is supernatural, and nothing more conspicuously so than this. It is possible only because God is love, and asserts His love as the last reality in the universe in face of and above the tragic reality of sin. There is a stage in human experience at which we think sin is the last reality. The evil things we have done, the weight of them on our conscience, the consequences of them in our life, their incalculable, far-reaching, uncontrollable influence on the lives of others—these are the realities which we encounter everywhere, and from which we cannot get away. They are like an iron cage in which we have shut ourselves in: they are the very world in which we live and move and have our being, a world all misery and despair. But in point of fact, real as these things are, real as sin is with all its appalling consequences, they are not the ultimate reality in the universe. There is a reality which is deeper, which sub-

sists in spite of them, which is not defeated nor expelled from the world by them, which can take them for all that they are, yet appeal to the sinner through them, cling to him underneath them, rescue him from them. What is that other, that transcendent and ultimate reality, that brings hope to despair? It is the love of God.

The love of God is the subject of the Christian revelation, and if the question is raised, How do we know that God is love? the answer is, We know it in Christ. Even when He lived on earth, Christ imparted to men somehow His own conviction of the Father's love, His own assurance that there is forgiveness with Him. He did it by explicit teaching, such as we find in the parable of the prodigal son, or in the parable of the two debtors. He did it by Himself exercising the prerogative of pardon, and exercising it with power. When He said to the paralytic, Courage, child; thy sins are forgiven thee, His word was no more impotent than when He said a moment later, Take up thy bed and walk. It passed with divine power to the stricken and despairing con-

science; the burden of his sinful past rolled from the sinner's shoulders; the spring of love gushed in his heart, and the new man was born. Christ convinced men, too, of the reality of forgiveness by His attitude to those who wronged Him personally. When He turned in the judgment hall and looked upon Peter and caught him on the edge of the precipice over which Judas fell; when He prayed on the Cross, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do; when He came back from death, and stood in the midst of the men who had all forsaken Him and fled, and said, Peace be upon you; forgiveness, if we may say so, was present and incarnate in Him. This is indeed the sense of His whole life. There is no sin in it, and no condonation of sin. He never regards sin as anything else than what it is. We may say of Him as simply as the Psalmist said of God, Evil shall not dwell with Thee. Yet it is of Him that it stands written, as the very characteristic of His life, This Man receiveth sinners. And that, when we come to the point, is what forgiveness means. It means the receiving

of sinners by One who is inexorable to sin. It means divine and holy love, conscious of all that sin is, seeing it, feeling it, wounded by it, judging it, bearing it—yet stretching out its hands to the sinful, inspiring penitence and making it welcome. If we want to be sure that there *is* such divine and holy love in the world—that forgiveness is a real thing, a power in God and an experience in men—there is only one thing to do: look to Jesus. He who has seen Him has seen the reality and the power of the forgiveness of sin.

You may be astonished that in all this time I have said nothing of the atonement or of the death of Christ as an expiation for sin, or of the ideas associated with such great New Testament words as, In Him we have our redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our trespasses. It is not because I do not believe that such words go to the root of the matter, but because they have a doctrinal character, and are rather the fruit of reflection on forgiveness, than the way to experience forgiveness; and it is those who are seeking the way to this experience, and

who find it blocked, to whom I wish to speak. The way to it is Jesus Christ. It is in His company that you will learn the possibility and the reality of pardon; and you will learn these things as you learn all that is great and priceless in life—as you learn to believe in God or in the love of your mother—in ways too subtle and complicated for any doctrinal statement. But you will learn this also, if you learn anything, that the forgiveness of which we are assured in Christ is forgiveness that has come to us at a great cost. There is a passion in that love of God which appeals to sinful men in Christ; there is something awful and tragic in it, at which our hearts faint within us. Now it is this cost of forgiveness, this passion in the love of God, this tragic element in redemption, to which theologians from St. Paul down have sought to give expression in their doctrines of atonement. A doctrine of atonement is a doctrine of the cost of forgiveness to God. In any given form it may be very inadequate to the truth; in any form whatever it is sure to be in some way inadequate. But who will deny that forgiveness *does* cost?

Who does not feel that a cheap forgiveness —a forgiveness which costs God nothing, and which really means that sin is nothing to Him—is itself a kind of moral horror? Who does not feel that such a cheap forgiveness, in which no new and potent motive enters into life, is an insult to the desperate need of sinful men? It would mean that God took as a trifle what to us was misery, despair, and death. But thanks be to God, there is no cheap forgiveness in the New Testament. God does not save us easily. He does not save us from afar. He comes in Jesus Christ into our life, and makes all its burdens and responsibilities His own. He sees sin as we cannot see it, feels it as we cannot feel it, mourns it as we cannot mourn it, tastes the last bitterness of it in the loneliness and agony of the Cross; and his dying and undying love appeals to us through it all. There are no words in the world that bring home to us the cost of forgiveness like the New Testament words about the death of Jesus. The Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. When

we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. I beheld, and lo! in the midst of the throne a lamb as it had been slain. These are the words that make forgiveness credible, because they make it great. They speak of a divine love in it which has sounded depths we cannot fathom, and which appeals to us with a power which can make all things new.

It is in these words—rather, it is in this Man, Jesus Christ, and in His blood—in the passion of His life and death—that there is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. It *is* preached. What a miserable thing it would be to reason about forgiveness, to theologise upon it, even to preach about it, if one could not preach the very thing itself. It is preached here and now in Jesus Christ to all burdened consciences, to all corrupted natures, to all enslaved wills, to all thoughts and imaginations defiled, to all hearts estranged from God, to all apathy, to all resignation, to all fear and despair—there is forgiveness with

Him. Keep your face toward Christ and His passion. Remember that the Holy One receives sinners, and that only the Holy One can. Trust no stoicism, no quiet inner resolve to endure what cannot be mended. Trust no penitence but that which Christ's Passion inspires. Repentance unto life is not a species of good works; it is a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it unto God with full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience. It is a condition of being forgiven, if you will, but it is a fruit of the perception that there is forgiveness with Him. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

JAMES DENNEY.

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

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IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

We reach now the last article of the Creed —'I believe in . . . the life everlasting'—and the question set before us to discuss is the great and solemn one, Is there life after death?

I

Not less remarkable than any answer that may be given to it is this question itself. It is a thing of profound significance that men should even ask if there be life after death. It is far more significant that they should ask this than that they should ask if there be a God. For the world naturally raises the question of a God. Its phenomena imply a great cause, and the contention of Atheism or Monism that this cause is to be found only within the world itself is a later reflection rather than the first and obvious suggestion. But the world which raises the question of

God seems to settle any question of immortality. The great fact of death seems to do that and to do it in a way which admits of not a moment's dispute. What a tremendous phenomenon death is! How unmistakable, how incontrovertible, how universal, how seemingly final! Is it not death that, as the Roman poet did, we must call immortal?[1] And yet, in the face of this, and although experience shows us nothing but mortality—shows it us with uninterrupted consistency and overwhelming cumulative cogency—humanity instinctively, unanimously, and persistently has asked if man be not deathless, and, I shall venture to add, comparatively few men are quite convinced that, when they die, they die. Now, I am not going to use this in the least as an argument for immortality. But it shows that the question before us now is no mere 'question of the Creed,' but is one of the inevitable problems of humanity which cannot be dismissed without gagging or drugging something in the very heart of man.

[1] Lucretius, *De Rerum Nat.*, iii. 867: '*Mortalem vitam mors cum immortalis ademit.*'

If this be true, then what shall we say of the manifest indifference on this question which is so characteristic of modern life and thought? 'In the thinking of civilised men,' a well-known preacher and scholar has said, 'there has been for years a steady ebb from the shores of another life.'[1] No one will question this who is conversant with current literature and contemporary manners. In poetry, the modern note is far removed from that of Wordsworth's *Ode*, or Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, or Browning's indomitable ventures towards a faith that challenged death; in philosophy we find in even the more spiritual of teachers nothing of the place given to this problem which it once had; and even in theology, what was in Butler's day a cardinal article of 'natural religion' is now, in, for example, typical Ritschlians, virtually omitted from the system of doctrine. All this—which it would be so easy to illustrate but there is not time—finds its reflex alike in the pulpit, from which one rarely now hears a really

[1] G. A. Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Old Testament*, p. 209.

weighty reference to any world but this—and in the mind of the average 'man in the street,' who, too often, has hardly a glance to give to anything beyond the duties and cares and pleasures of this secular life, and 'takes the cash and lets the credit go.'

The reason which so far explains this numbness of mind to the question of the future is just that our generation is so engrossed with the past and the present that it has not time to think of the future. Now, it is fair to say that this may be not unworthy. As regards the past, it is traceable in part to the influence of the doctrine of evolution, which has so marvellously unfolded the romance of man's history as to draw away attention from the problem of his destiny. And as regards the present, if the whole trend of modern life be secular, that need not be taken entirely in a bad sense. Often it is a noble engrossment with this present world—a desire to make religion practical and to establish the Kingdom of God in the lives of men and their conditions of life here. When for such reasons the thought of the unseen future has receded

from the mind, one can trust to time and truth and human nature itself to restore the balance. But, too often and too obviously, this indifference towards the thought of immortality in our day is in no sense noble, but is simply an absorption of mind and body and soul in ephemeral gain or pleasure which leaves neither the desire nor even the capacity to think of life's real issues and final destinies. In this aspect of it, this modern mood is sheer and even base unbelief—unbelief not merely in creeds or dogmas but in the things of God, the things of the soul, the things that make life real and great and worthy. It is this kind of unbelief in immortality which Dante denounces as 'most stupid, most vile, and most damnable,'[1] and which he treats as the fundamental heresy.[2] When one comes to deal with the scientific difficulties about immortality, arising from the facts of the perishableness of the body, one should speak with respect and reasoned argument; but when one is met by this unbelief which has no thought of the immortality of the soul because it has

[1] *Convito*, II. ix. [2] *Inf.*, x. 15.

no soul for anything more than what is a beast's life or a butterfly's, then there is no place for either respect or reasoning. There is no place for surprise that a man who lives utterly for the lower things of sense and the poorer things of time should feel no interest in a life that excels sense and outreaches time —though doubtless he would like a little more of sense and a little longer time. We shall have occasion to refer to this again later; meanwhile, must not one sad reason for this generation's manifest indifference to this great and solemn and inspiring question be acknowledged to be a sheer shallowness of mind and worldliness of life, on which we may well invoke Dante's scorn—no, shall I not say rather, Christ's mercy?

It is obvious that the subject—to the discussion of which, without further preface, we must now turn—is one which has many aspects, and I cannot hope to deal with it exhaustively. But I am anxious to speak to a conclusion. The following seems the best way of doing this. I shall ask, first, What is said against the possibility of life after death? If we find

that not fatal, I shall then ask what there is in human nature, and apart from the revelation of religion, which, if it does not prove it, at least points to it. Then, lastly, I shall try to show how the true religion confirms this and makes it not a hope merely but an assurance of faith. The first part of what follows will touch on science; the second on philosophy; the third on Christianity.

II

The argument against even the possibility of immortality comes from one quarter, and may be stated in a single sentence. This is part of its force; it is so distinct and graspable. It lies in the assertion of the materialistic school of physical science that conscious life is but a function of brain, and that, therefore, when the material organism of the brain is dissolved, as clearly happens after death, it is impossible that the life can survive. On this ground it is claimed by such men as Karl Vogt and Ernest Haeckel that science has put a veto on the whole idea of personal immortality. 'Such an idea,' says Haeckel—

I quote him because his name has recently been much popularised among us—'is in hopeless contradiction to the most solid empirical truths of modern science.'[1] This physical obstacle is the most permanent objection to faith in a future life—it is as old as the great-minded Lucretius, and as modern as the *Clarion*—and it is also the most palpable. It is an objection that cannot be answered by eloquent appeals to sentiment, but, as I have already said, is to be met with respect and reason. It involves a question of scientific fact, namely—Is, or is not, the conscious life of man so related to his perishable physical organism that, if the latter be destroyed, the former must cease to be?

Now, it is obvious that the answer to this question depends on the kind of relation existing between body and spirit, between brain and mind. That there is a relationship between them is indisputable, and it is marvellously subtle and intricate—so much so that probably a physical movement is associated with every mental one. But all this correspondence

[1] *Riddle of the Universe*, ch. x.

between mind and brain—which is to be recognised in the fullest and freest way—does nothing to answer our question whether if the brain be destroyed the mind is destroyed too. Things may be in one kind of relation to each other so that if you take away the one you end the other; or they may be—equally closely and minutely—related to one another with no such consequence. A couple of illustrations will make this plain. Steam is related to, say, a locomotive engine. Take away the engine and there is an end to the steam. But why? Because of the kind of relation between the engine and the steam—because it is a casual relationship. But take, say, a ray of light in a prism. The refraction and colorisation of the light are in manifest relation to the prism. But take away the prism, and do you destroy the light? Certainly not. And why not? Because the kind of relationship here is not that of a cause—the prism does not cause the light—but is rather that of a medium supplying opportunity for one particular form of its manifestation. I hope this is clear, and, if it is clear, the application of it will be clear too. The whole question of

the possibility of the continuance of conscious life after the dissolution of the body is simply this—is the relationship of matter to mind that of a cause as an engine's is to steam, or merely that of a medium as a prism's is to light? If it be the former, then physical death ends spiritual existence too; but if it be the latter, then physical death ends merely one particular form, the bodily, of spiritual existence, but that existence itself may continue just as light continues to be, even though, by the breaking of a prism, one particular form of its manifestation is destroyed.

Now, the moment it is perceived that this is the right way of stating the question, that moment it follows that no science can pronounce any veto on immortality. No science can say that brain is causally related to mind, for the plain and indisputable reason that no science has the slightest inkling of how they are related at all. The connection between physical and mental phenomena is, to use Tyndall's oft quoted word for it, 'unthinkable.'[1] Why and how a movement of brain

[1] *Fragments of Science*, p. 420.

molecules should be accompanied by consciousness is a thing of which no kind of explanation can be given. The *nexus* is 'unthinkable.' How then can you assert it must be a causal *nexus*? But, unless it be and be shown to be a causal *nexus*, the veto on immortality falls to the ground, and it is open to hold that matter may be related to consciousness as a prism is to light—merely a medium of one special form of its manifestation. I say it is open to hold that: the idea cannot be vetoed by any scientific fact.

Of course, one might go much further than this, and might argue that the idea of matter as causally related to mind and therefore existent before and apart from mind is demonstrably unphilosophical and impossible. But to enter on this is not necessary for our present purpose. What we were called on to meet was an attempted veto of the possibility of immortality on the ground of the relation of perishable matter to conscious life. It is enough to answer, first, that the veto is valid only if the relation of matter to consciousness be a causal one, and, secondly, that no science can so

describe it or indeed can describe it at all. Physical or physiological science, then, cannot veto immortality. 'There is,' said John Stuart Mill, 'no evidence in science against the immortality of the soul but that negative evidence which consists in the absence of evidence in its favour.'[1] These words may serve as a due corrective to the dogmatic assertions of some modern materialists who forget that, while it is good that a Christian believer should speak of his 'humble faith,' it is also good that an unbelieving scientist remember that his unfaith should be equally humble. He may be altogether agnostic as to immortality, even utterly sceptical. But he cannot veto it.

III

If then it is illegitimate and impossible to veto the idea of human immortality on the ground of the physical aspects of man's life, we may go on to the next stage of our argument and inquire if this hope is supported by any more general consideration of the characteristics

[1] *Three Essays.*

of human nature. The answer I am going to submit is that that about man by which really and essentially he is man implies and demands a life not limited by sense and time.

What is that in man's life which makes it man's life as more than the life of the brute creation? Is it not conscious reason and morality? Now, both of these things are essentially of more than sense and time. The rational life is. The intelligence that knows things in time is not and cannot be itself of time, and, indeed, there could not be for us such a conception as that of time if we, who conceive it, did not stand above it. The moral life is. The conscience neither seeks its authority from the things of this world nor binds itself to justify its laws by them. Moreover, the aims which these rational and moral principles of his being set before man are things which he knows are quite out of his reach in this finite life: the task of reason, which is to know the truth, and the task of morality, which is to strive to realise the ethical ideal, are alike incumbent upon us as men, and unattainable for us as mortals. This then is man—

a being who, if he will live the life that essentially and distinctively is man's, must use categories of thought and obey principles of conduct which have their source beyond sense and their satisfaction beyond time. In other words, whether or not man actually is immortal, he is called on to live as if he were. Every time you think with conscious reason, and every time you act according to the ethical ideal, you are living as if you were immortal—that is to say, according to principles and laws and aims which cannot be even stated, and certainly cannot be fulfilled if you do not look beyond 'our bourne of Time and Place.' And this, I say again, is the distinctive thing in man's life —the thing that makes it man's. The animal lives occupied with and obedient to the demand only of the finite—eating and drinking, propagation of species, self-defence, and so on. Man shares this finite animal life, but the distinctive thing about him is a life not arising from these things and not satisfied with them—a life the essential character of which is eternal whether its actual conditions be consistent with that or no.

Now, consider what is involved in all that has just been said. This being, man—domiciled in time, but bid to live according to a reason and a morality which are of more than time—is the supreme achievement of the whole process of nature. By a development, slow, stupendous, often terrible, evolution has worked, unhastingly, unrestingly, towards this result—namely, the producing of a creature the law of whose true life shall be that he live under principles and for ends that are eternal. And the whole process of nature, we must believe, is rational: on this supposition all science as much as all faith is built. Well, is it consistent with reason to say that the climax of the labour of evolution is to make a being who is to live under eternal principles and for eternal ends and yet under only temporal conditions? Is it reasonable to demand of man that he live as if he were immortal, if, as a matter of fact, he is not immortal? The question of immortality is therefore just the question of the reality and rationality of the moral life which is demanded of man. To evolve in man rational and moral being and bid him live

according to these things, which are things never fully realisable in this world, is precisely as reasonable as would be the evolution by nature of the fins of a fish and yet never providing for it water in which to swim. 'God and nature,' says Aristotle, 'do nothing in vain'; but how vain—how fragmentary, how frustrated, how futile—are man's highest thought and his purest affections and his most spiritual moral endeavour within the limits of sense and time! Just as his knowledge is beginning, his heart becoming purified, his character ripening—just then he collapses into a clod. What a waste is here, what an irrational anti-climax after all a lifetime's pursuit of truth and love and holiness, which, in turn, is the last effort of all the unconscious labour of the ages. I am not pressing this from, so to speak, man's point of view; but, if one may say so, from God's. It is not that man desires a greater life than this in order that he may be happy; it is that reason demands for him a greater life in order that nature's work be justified. And, thus, may we not adopt the view of a well-known writer on evolution, who

says, 'I believe in the immortality of the soul, not in the sense in which I accept demonstrable truths of science, but as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work'?[1]

To this the reply is made, that doubtless there is a rational end in all nature, for 'God and nature do nothing in vain,' but that end is something infinitely wider and grander than the personal life of the individual consciousness. It is rather the progressive corporate life of humanity, and it is in this great tide that the individual finds his true and his only immortality. But all that has been urged as to the life of reason and morality being essentially of more than time is true, and true only of the individual life of persons. It has no meaning as applied to the corporate life of humanity. An abstract generalisation such as that—and humanity remains an abstract noun even though you spell it with a capital H—has not reason and morality just because it has not personality. The thought that transcends sense, the moral life lived under laws and for ideals that are beyond this world, the

[1] Fiske's *Destiny of Man*, p. 62.

character that is built up but not finished—these are the thought, the moral life, the character of the personal individuals. It is an irrelevance to say that even if these individuals perish, the ends of their life are attained in the progress of the race; for this means, either the generalised abstraction of humanity which has neither personal consciousness nor personal character, and in which, therefore, the ends of personal consciousness and personal character cannot be realised, or, simply, future generations, the individual persons in which, however, have no more claim to immortality than we have, nor would their self-realisation be any answer to the unfulfilment of our being. No: the whole argument —the argument, that is, that a man's rational and moral life, only in living which is he really a man, is essentially of more than time—either has no validity at all, or it has a personal validity and implies that the individual man of whose life this is personally true—that he and not humanity or another generation, but he—must be destined for more than time, unless his evolution be a fruitless irrationality.

This, then, is the argument of philosophy for immortality, which is the second stage of our reasoning. I said, in the first place, that, in respect of man's physical nature, it is not to be asserted that he cannot possess immortality; we may say now, in respect of his rational and moral nature, that he ought to be immortal—he, the person, whose life's law and ideal essentially are eternal. We must not say man cannot be immortal: we may say he ought to be. Yes; but is he? That is the question, and, with all our talk of science and philosophy, we have hardly yet begun to reach an affirmation about it. Man may go up to the gates of life everlasting—science has no right to forbid that. He may knock at them —philosophy even invites him to do that. But are they opened? They can be opened only from within, and the answer to this question we must seek only from the true religion.

Before I go on to speak of that answer, let us ask ourselves if we realise now the question with any earnestness and keenness of feeling? I have been urging that a man's true life is too great for this short span of years. But

are you living man's true life? If not, no wonder if you are among those of whom I spoke in the early part of this lecture who are dull to the whole idea of a life beyond death. Let a man live the life which for man is life indeed, and then he will understand this quest, this claim for immortality. Live only for sense and sin, and then the extinction of death may seem a kind of rest to the body—'dig the grave and let me lie'—and to the conscience a positive relief. But live for truth, for love, for holiness, and then you will realise what, to that life, death is. It is an *indignity*. Yes, death is perhaps not resented by men and women whose lives are the lives not of men and women, but, as I have already described them, of beasts or butterflies; but to those, of every creed, whose lives declared them to be of the great catholic 'household of faith,' who devoted themselves to duty or truth without honour and without reward, who laid all that the world counts dear upon the altar of love, or who 'wrestled on towards heaven' with faith and prayer 'declaring plainly that they seek a country'—to all these what

an indignity, I say, it is. When humanity lives true to its nobler self, how we appeal for it from this outrage of the grave—as Browning at his Grammarian's funeral and Tennyson by the bier of Hallam, and as, with even deeper pity and pathos, we all do when we see the humblest faithful life—and *demand* for it an immortality.

IV

It is, I have said, only from the true religion that the answer of God to this demand can be surely gathered. Persons of great spirituality (such as Dante) or of optimistic temperament (such as Browning) may be sufficiently assured of it from within their own breasts, but, for most men, there is need of the 'surer word' for which Plato longed, and which is come to us in the revelation which is recorded in the Scriptures and which culminated in Christ.

In turning then to religion for the third part of our argument, I wish to find as broad a basis as possible. All through I have tried to do that. In arguing against any veto on immortality on physical grounds, I did not

seek to establish idealism, but was content to state that we certainly could not declare that matter is the cause of mind. In arguing for the essentially eternal character of man's rational and moral nature, I did not say this proved immortality, but only made a case for it in reason and in right. Here then I wish to treat the witness of religion broadly. We need not pin our faith to proof texts or depend upon disputed dogmas. To any man who believes at all in the reality and truth of the religion described in Scripture and culminating in Christ, it supplies, in its essential character, the assurance he needs about immortality.

What is the essential character of that religion? Is it not this—God calling men to a fellowship with Himself? That is the very marrow and meaning of religion as the Bible describes it and as Christ taught it. From the very beginning it was so, and 'Abraham was called the friend of God.' To the summit it retained this essential character, except that Christ bade us call God not merely our Friend but by the closer name

of Father. Now, consider this for a moment, and you will see how it bears on the question of immortality. God has called men into this friendship—to begin and enter on this intercourse with Him. In doing so, He looks for loyalty and faithfulness on your part, but He not less pledges Himself to be faithful to you. If, then, it be a fellowship with God to which men are called, is that to lead in but a few years to a *cul de sac*? Is it exhausted—a friendship with God, a knowing Him and loving Him—in this little life? And, yet, if it be God—a God faithful to the friendship He has Himself proposed—will He let it be thwarted and ended when it is but begun? If, then, the religion of the Scriptures be true, if, in other words, there be a God who really means and really will carry through the pledges and promises and offers of the Gospel, surely His faithfulness will see to it that it does not collapse. Thus, faith in immortality is a faith in the faithfulness of God to the Gospel. The whole attitude of Christ to the subject is the admission of this. Christ did not argue for immortality. He preached and

was the Gospel. Then he added, as to immortality, 'If it were not so, I would have told you'; meaning thereby that naturally the hearer of the Gospel would assume from it a life beyond, and if that most natural and necessary assumption had been erroneous, Christ would have corrected it.

This is the true religious argument for the life beyond death; it is, I repeat, simply having faith in the faithfulness of God to the Gospel, as the Scriptures describe that and as Christ revealed it. Observe how it supplies just the assurance which the argument from the rational and moral nature of man requires. That philosophical argument led us to say that man ought to be immortal. But the question remained, Is he? Is the Power, which is supreme over all and according to whose will things are what they are, a Power that ignores this capacity and claim in man, or that recognises him as man and all in him that man can be? The answer is in the true religion and the offer of the Gospel. Here is God calling us to be His friends and pledging Himself to realise all that that call involves. Certainly it

involves more than a few years here can exhaust. But, if that be so, then undoubtedly the God who thus 'is not ashamed to be called our God' will be found to have 'prepared for us a city.' Here, I repeat, is the true religious argument for immortality, and it completes the philosophical argument. The latter is that man ought to be immortal if his rational and moral nature is to be justified. The former is that he must be if God meant and means the Gospel.

Once you thus get the argument finally grounded on what God is—which, indeed, is the only final and ultimate ground of anything—all remaining difficulties lose their force. I can but glance at two. Take that which arises out of the thought of the intolerable and overwhelming number of human beings that have been, or are, or shall be born. Do you ask me to believe—I can imagine some of you saying to me—in the personal individual immortality of, say, the swarms of the Chinese, or the negroes, or the millions of Egyptians and Assyrians and what not of ancient history? I reply that what I ask

you to do is to believe in God and in the Gospel, and then I say that the love of God and the grace of His Gospel are as real and personal towards any one of these creatures as towards any one of us. That your imagination reels and boggles in thinking of it is nothing to the point: it is not from our finite faculties that humanity receives immortality, but from God who is Infinite in thought and love as in everything else. But take a more real difficulty. The Gospel, I have been saying, holds out to men the idea and ideal of a divine friendship which has eternal issues. But is it, after all, more than ideas and ideals? Are these issues really translatable into fact? Can even God, in face of what are His own laws of life and death, make death into life? Christ answered these questions when He said to the Sadducees, 'Ye know not the power of God.' We need the reminder in this age which apparently thinks that, in discovering a little more about nature, it is setting some limit to the resources of Almighty God. Do you think, says Christ in effect, that all the known forces of nature which so overwhelm you with their

irresistibleness and inevitableness so that you doubt if God *can* raise the dead—do you think that these for one moment measure what God can do? You see, as Job said, but a little of His ways. 'Ye know not the power of God.' Now, Christ did not argue about this transcendent power of God; He did not argue that it could raise the dead. Power is a thing that is proved not by arguing about it but by exhibiting it. And Christ gave us the exhibition of the power of God as supreme over all known facts and laws, and as able verily to raise the dead—gave us it by what He was, an indubitably supernatural person, and by what He did on the first Easter morning. Here the promise of immortality that is in the Gospel becomes translated indeed into fact, and our faith receives its final assurance in not only a God who seems in His grace to have called us to a life beyond, but also a God who is able to deliver us from death 'according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.'

And, thus, I end the argument, as all through

I have sought to pursue it, on the basis of fact. We looked, first, at the apparently adverse facts about man's physical nature, and reasoned that these could not veto immortality. Man *may be* immortal. Then we looked at the facts of the rational and moral nature, and found these meant a life lived under laws, and for ends that time and sense neither could originate nor can satisfy. Man *ought to be* immortal. And, then, we turned to the broadest and basal facts of religion — the religion which is the assurance of God's love to us personally, and the call to us to enter into a friendship with Him—and concluded that, if this Gospel be true and be truly meant by God, it cannot be exhausted in this life; while, finally, if this conclusion seems to raise not only intolerable problems for the imagination, but also the distinct question of whether God does or ever can carry it out, we find the answer in Him in whose character and career are manifested at once the infinite love and the infinite power of God. Man, then, not only *may be* and *ought to be*, but, we are assured, *is* immortal. Death—that great fact

—is not the greatest or final fact. There are facts greater, deeper, more significant even than death—facts about the nature of man, the character of God, the story of Christ—and it is upon these facts that the sure faith in the life immortal stands.

V

This lecture is meant to be primarily apologetic, and I have therefore confined myself to the question, 'Is there life after death?' and have not attempted any kind of discussion of the nature of the world beyond, as to which, moreover, nothing need be added to Christ's word that it is 'my Father's house.' For the same reason, I have kept the treatment of the subject, perhaps too severely, to the plane of reasoning. But one cannot leave so great and serious a theme as the immortality of our being simply with argument. You do not believe in it, you are not within sight of it, unless it be to you a thing not merely arguable, even successfully arguable, but a thing infinitely solemn and unspeakably wonderful.

I shall not dwell on its solemnity. But let me make it clear that when I spoke of the Gospel of God's grace as the assurance of immortality, that does not mean that only those who respond to this are immortal. That would be, as a phrase of Plato's puts it, 'to give the bad too good a bargain.' Napoleon once said that not every one is an atheist who would like to be; not every one is mortal who would like to be. The acceptance of the gospel makes immortality a great confidence; but the basis of immortality is the facts of your being and of God's relationship to you—facts which remain whether you rise to them and respond to them or not, and which in any case go on to their inevitable issues. In this lies the ineffaceable solemnity, for every man, of his dying—that which makes the death of a human being an utterly different thing from that of an animal. Have you ever watched an animal die? Perhaps to your sympathy it seemed something grave and dread, but to the animal it was no more than this. Grown old and feeble, he feels the queerness of some new sensation stealing over him, and he slips away

to some quiet, safe spot, and lays him down on the ground, perhaps wondering a little why he is so sleepy, but, otherwise, with no question troubling his head other than when, any evening, he had dropped off to sleep, and with no apprehension that, when the morning light calls him to-morrow, he will not waken.[1] Not thus do we watch a passing soul; not thus does a man turn his face to the light for the last time. And why? Because of the infinite solemnity of our immortality.

But I shall not dwell on this and shall not discuss now wherein it becomes even a fear to the conscience, nor how this is relieved. Let me close by saying—in little more than a word—how, when it can be looked upon with not fear but confidence, our immortality is a thing unspeakably wonderful, that stirs a hope so high that it hurts almost like a fear.

Think of it. Think of it as regards your individual experience. Nothing is more certain than that your earthly life will close. And that is, as I have said, a solemn thing. But,

[1] Some of these phrases are suggested by a passage in the charming volume entitled *The School of the Woods.*

to an immortal being, is it not, too, a great thing? To pass through that low and dark portal to what no human eye hath seen nor tongue can tell—

> 'How will the change strike you and me,
> In the house not made with hands?'

We speak of the great days of a man's life—days on which he secures a public honour or wins a woman's hand or has a stroke of luck in business; but what day in a man's life can be called great in comparison with *the* great day of his experience—the day on which he passes through death?

Think of it as regards your dear ones whom you have 'loved and lost,' and whom you so constantly recall with the dull ache—perhaps a bitterness—in your heart. They are dead. And that is a sad thing—a thing that has changed the colour of everything in the world to some of you. But, they are immortal beings and are living—I say, are living! You loved them and would have protected them from death if you could, but you could not do it. God loves them too, and He can protect them from death, and He does. They have only,

as Dante says, 'changed their life.'[1] Always think of them as verily in 'the land of the living'—that land of which you too are an heir.

> 'They are that city's shining spires
> We travel to.'

With such thoughts of our blessed dead, we shall be often saved, in our journey, from what is unworthy and unholy.

Think of it, lastly—though this I hardly dare to say—as regards the Lord Jesus Christ your Saviour. You profess to be His. Then listen: 'His servants shall serve Him and they shall see His face.' I say I hardly dare to say that, and I shall not attempt to speak of it.

These things are of the unspeakable wonderfulness of immortality. They are not sentimentalities, nor even speculations; they are truths of faith, and we do well to let our minds feel their supernatural spell. Not, certainly, that we should, by a sickly 'other worldliness,' enervate our sense of life here. The life we

[1] *Purg.*, xxx. 125. Any one who would realise the immortal world and make it have content to influence imagination and life should give his mind to Dante. But Dante must be read slowly and read through.

now live in this world is meant to be lived earnestly and effectively: it is not faith but scepticism which would deprecate that. But let us realise *what, for us, the word living means.* It does not mean threescore years and ten. It means a living and a dying and a living again. That is what it means for a human being to live. These three things are really just one thing—namely, our existence. Let us, first, in a deeper sense than the poet meant by the words, see life 'steadily,' and see it 'whole.' Then let us take up that part of our life which we are to live now in this great and interesting world, and live it, as I said, earnestly and effectively—yes, and happily—but, also, thoughtfully and reverently and prayerfully, as surely those should who realise how solemn and how wonderful a thing it is for man to live.

P. Carnegie Simpson.

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